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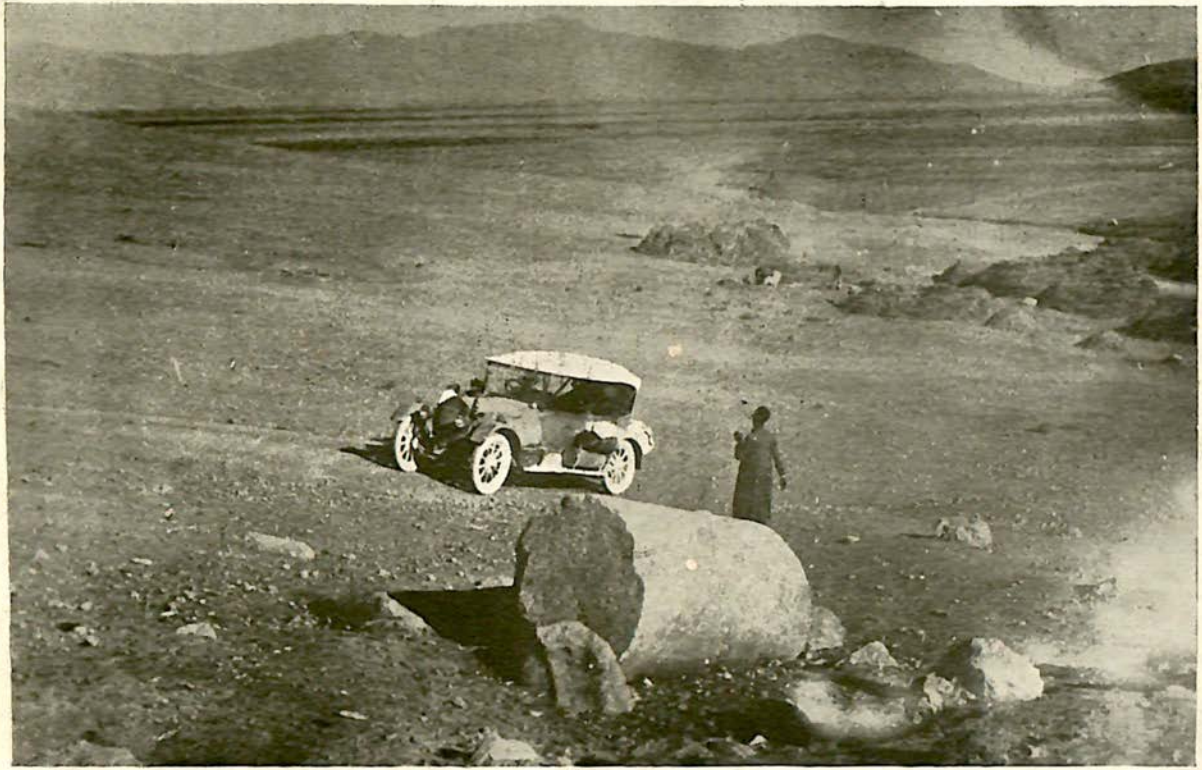

"FELIX" AMONG THE ROMAN RUINS AT KANGAVAR

[Frontispiece

By Car to India

By Major F. A. C. Forbes-Leith, F.R.G.S.

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8 *ILLUSTRATIONS*

LONDON: HUTCHINSON & Co.,
34 *PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.*

915.4
56946

Made and Printed in Great Britain by
The Camelot Press Limited,
Southampton

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INTRODUCTION

AT the beginning of 1924 I decided to make an attempt to reach India by motor-car. Aeroplanes had proved their ability to get there on several occasions. An airship service was projected, but no effort had yet been made to bridge the distance by mechanical transport.

I immediately settled down in an effort to bring the scheme into operation, a matter which proved extremely difficult. Even if the project were conducted on the most prudent lines, it was obvious that a great deal of money would be required to make it feasible. It was necessary, also, to show that the expedition could, at least, be made to pay for itself by means of a travel film and by the interesting journalism to which the journey would lend itself.

With very few exceptions, friends whom I tried to interest, seemed quite convinced of my insanity, and my "wild cat scheme" was, as I happen to know, the laugh of nearly every acquaintance I had. To overcome the natural prejudices of certain

people whose whole world existed in the immediate vicinity of a big city, and whose greatest adventure in life was the yearly fortnight at the seaside, was a heart-breaking job, and I nearly gave it up in despair.

However, after a time a number of friends were persuaded to join me, and sufficient interest was obtained to justify me in setting to work on the scheme.

One of the first problems to arise was that of the composition and equipment of the expedition. If we took with us everything desirable for such a long journey (which would pass through countries of extremely cold climate, and others which were the hottest existent) we should require a small fleet of cars. With such a convoy, we should be faced with the difficulty of having immobile personnel on our hands in the event of one car breaking down and having to be abandoned.

After very careful consideration, I came to the conclusion that we must try to carry the project through with one car only. This car must be light enough to be man-handled occasionally, and yet powerful enough to carry an exceptionally heavy load and to climb any gradient.

Eventually, a 14 h.p. Wolseley, Colonial pattern, touring car was chosen, and with the exception of extra tanks, it was an ordinary standard model. This fitted our requirements for size, capacity, power, and low petrol consumption, and, although extremely flexible, was certainly the strongest-built car of all the scores of makes that I inspected. In making this choice, I felt that we had reduced our risks of mechanical trouble to a minimum. The car was fitted with Rapson oversize tyres.

The next question of importance was personnel. Mr. Allan Wroe, of Leeds, who was interested in the undertaking, was chosen to keep the diary from which my newspaper articles were to be written. He was twenty-three years of age, of good physique, and had the advantage of a short experience of the tropics during the War. The support he gave me during the early days, when the trip was in embryo, was invaluable, and his subsequent breakdown in health, caused by the rigours of the journey, was much to be regretted.

For the making of the cinematograph film I had come to an agreement with the famous

film-producing firm of Pathé Frères, and Mr. Montagu Redknap, one of their experts in travel cinematography, was detailed to accompany us. He had recently returned from a strenuous picture-making expedition in British Guiana, and was well fitted to stand the hardships of such a trip. As events showed, he proved the ideal man. To succeed on such a venture as this, cheerfulness is one of the most necessary assets, and Redknap proved himself a super-optimist and a great companion.

Equipment presented a difficult problem. The cinema camera, with its tripod and spare film, weighed nearly 200 lbs. Camp equipment weighed 120 lbs.; essential spares, about 60 lbs. Moreover, when our extra tank was loaded, it gave us an extra weight of 80 lbs. It was found necessary to limit personal baggage to 35 lbs. per man, a very meagre allowance for such a long journey.

Tools, emergency rations, maps, cameras, film developing outfit, spare footboard boxes, etc., made another 100 lbs., bringing our total load up to 680 lbs., exclusive of ourselves, whose total weight was 36 stone,

Later the load was to be increased to 850 lbs. —a very heavy burden for a light car.

The spare parts carried were negligible, and consisted of spring leaves, spare magneto, brake linings, spare piston and connecting rod, nuts and bolts, two spare tyres and two spare tubes. As nothing could be left to chance, several dumps were made ahead, namely, at Belgrade, Constantinople, Baghdad and Teheran, but, as will be seen later, we had no reason to draw on them.

The route we planned to follow was through France, Italy, Jugo-Slavia, Bulgaria, Turkey in Europe, Asia Minor, Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Baluchistan, and, although we had to change our plans appreciably at times, we were fortunate enough to stand by our original course in principle. I had hoped to be through Iraq before the great summer heat, but circumstances prevented it. In the result, however, that fact added considerably to the interest of the journey.

Three and a half months of extremely hard work and worry brought our preparations to a close, and on Sunday, April 27th, 1924, all was ready for a beginning to be made on the next day.

As the expedition had been organised in Leeds, we were to set out from that city, but farewell ceremonies had also been organised to take place in London, giving us, as it were, a double send-off.

By Car to India

CHAPTER I

FROM LEEDS TO THE CÔTE D'AZUR

THE people of Leeds assembled in force to see us off, and the Lord Mayor, Sir Edwin Airey, named the car at the Town Hall. The name bestowed on the car was "Felix" —after the famous film cat, whose effigy was perched, as a mascot, on the car. We purred up to London, a distance of 200 miles, in six hours, which was a very good trial.

The next day we were entertained to a farewell luncheon at the Trocadero Restaurant, which was presided over by Captain Reginald Berkeley, M.P., and attended by a goodly number of public men and well-wishers. To our great surprise, we found a large crowd outside in Shaftesbury Avenue to give us a send-off, and the police had quite a difficulty in making a way for us to pass.

We set off in a heavy rainstorm to Folkestone, where, early next day Felix was slung on

board the cross-Channel steamer, and landed at Boulogne one and half hours later. We were soon clear of the Customs, and we had long been anticipating the joys of the French cuisine, but, alas, we were to be disappointed, for one of the ship's officers, who had taken a great interest in us, insisted on taking us to the only place in Boulogne where it was possible to get "a real English steak"—a sad blow to our imagination.

What a change in conditions of life was obvious here, twenty-eight miles from home! Everyone was working at full speed, and there was every sign of the greatest prosperity. We were informed by the A.A. agent that in Paris that day there were only sixteen registered unemployed. They are so busy in France that no labour can be spared to repair the roads, and we found, later, that the great straight stretches to the south were in a sorry state.

We proceeded to Calais from Boulogne to pick up the last of our kit which had preceded us, and next day, in heavy rain, we ran through to Paris.

The famous cinema actor, Douglas Fairbanks, and his wife, Mary Pickford, had

expressed a wish to see us off on the following day. Unfortunately, Miss Pickford was unable to be present, but the redoubtable Douglas came to wish us God-speed. As, amidst the rattling of cinematograph machines and clicking of camera shutters, we turned our way toward the south, Douglas whispered to Felix to keep on purring, and thenceforth we adopted the slogan that "Felix keeps on purring," and purr he did continually.

Our next stop was at Briate, a pretty little village by the Loire. We put up at the Hôtel de la Poste, a quaint old thirteenth century inn. My room was reputed to have been used by Napoleon as his H.Q. in 1814. Our good hostess spared no effort to make us comfortable, and, tired of the continual worry, the bustle of our departure, and the noises of Paris, our sleep was sound and undisturbed.

On again to Moulins, a picturesque little town in the Loire valley, where we rested, and, after another day's drive down the valley of the Rhone, the beauty of which was obscured by torrential rains, we arrived at Lyons, the greatest manufacturing city in France.

What a contrast to our great industrial cities are those of France, where every building is clean and bright! The stone sets, of which the roads are made, are so void of mud that one could almost eat a meal off them, and everything one sees is pleasing to the eye. Small wonder that we Britons take our pleasures sadly, for the dullness of our towns and the depressing effect of damp atmosphere and continual fogs must tend to deaden our cheerful impulses.

Next morning we woke to find rain falling—not ordinary rain, but a tropical deluge, which lasted until noon. When it ceased, we left, only to get into the thick of it again a little later. This was a great pity, as we were passing through glorious country, which would have been most enjoyable had the weather been fine enough for us to see it.

The one fly in the ointment when motoring in France is the French chauffeur. Irrespective of road surface, his one object seems to be what the Americans call "treading on the gas." He never goes round a corner, always over it; every bend is taken at full speed, and usually on the wrong side of the road. You are never safe from this terrible

fellow, and at every turning there is a potential danger of a car coming round at terrific speed without any warning. France must be a profitable hunting-ground for the tyre merchant and the spring smith, for everyone drives as though springs and tyres were worth about a shilling each.

It was on this afternoon's run that we nearly came to an untimely end when negotiating a railway-crossing. In the village we were passing through, the railway-line ran down the side of the main street, and then took almost a right-angle turn across the road, which we could not see. An engine and a load of trucks were running down parallel with us, and we passed them slowly, when, without warning, the train caught us up again at the place where the line turns.

To brake would have left us across the lines; acceleration was our only chance; and, had it not been for Felix's ready response to the throttle, I am sure that all three of us would now have been forcing daisies out of the soil of "*La Belle France.*" However, a miss is as good as a mile, and we cleared the line with about two yards to spare.

Our pulses were beating so abnormally

that we stopped for ten minutes until the effect of our fright had passed, and, proceeding, reached Montlemar at 7 p.m., wet, tired, and hungry.

Much as I admire the French, in nearly every hotel in every town and city in France they play a game which is very one-sided, and which is known as "stinging the foreigner," and they have brought it to a very fine art. At our hotel in Montlemar, which was one of those officially recommended by the Touring Club de France, the cuisine was bad and the advertised charges very high. Imagine our surprise, when asking for *l'addition*, to find the prices nearly a hundred per cent. higher than in Paris. My Caledonian instincts rebelled, and, on tackling the very garrulous old landlady for a reduction, she refused indignantly to consider it.

On the club guide-book being produced, and on our threatening to report the matter to the T.C.F., her attitude changed completely. Fifty per cent. was immediately knocked off the bill, and she followed us to the car, almost in tears, begging us not to report the matter. May I advise tourists who motor through France to demand a scale of charges

always before booking. Five minutes' delay spent thus will often save half the bill, and secure better attention.

Although we had been continually in bad weather, as we drew south we found it gradually changing for the better. The sun shone, hay was being cut—and this in the first week in May. Wheat was ripening, fruit was forming, and not a leafless twig could be seen.

And as we lunched and rested under the shade of the walls of the famous twelfth century Castle of Flassons, we shed our greatcoats, and packed them up to send to Bombay for the homeward journey, their volume giving Felix 30 lbs. less to carry.

Another 150 miles of purring through sunshine, without a cloud, and we came suddenly in sight of the Mediterranean Sea, a tiny patch of sapphire blue on the horizon. Half an hour later we were in the beautiful little harbour of St. Raphael, surrounded by the usual amused crowd of admirers of Felix, where, after a bath and a delicious dinner, we slept the sleep of the really tired.

We were up early in the morning, and had a wonderful run. How our sympathy went out to our less fortunate brethren at home

who, after a hurried tussle with the inevitable eggs and bacon, were probably running for the 8.15 train! We spun through Cannes, Nice, Antibes, Monte Carlo, all of them sun-bathed jewels in a wonderful setting.

In 1923 the well-timbered hills behind the Riviera were devastated by forest fires, which partially mar its beauty, but already they were green again with young saplings. Far away inland, to our left, the snow-covered French and Italian Alps made a wonderful background to a perfect landscape. On our right was the sapphire-coloured Mediterranean —a really blue sea, the colour of which can only be appreciated in picture galleries by those who have not travelled south to see it.

We halted at Monte Carlo for a day, to give the car a general examination and tightening up. It was the close season, and was deserted by all but the poor Germans who, having lost the War, seek solace in the best Monte Carlo can give, and here they spend money like water. At the hotel in which we stayed, they were so numerous that it was hard at meal-times to hear ourselves talk while they ate.

Late in the afternoon we moved on seven

miles to Mentone, on the frontier, where we had a cheery welcome at a real English hotel, one of the few that had not closed down for the summer.

Felix, our worthy mascot, proved himself a great comedian, and did lots to help us in our troubles. For days before reaching the Franco-Italian frontier we were in fear and trembling of our fate at the hands of the Italian Customs officials. We scoured Mentone to find enough Italian money to pay the large deposit that our A.A. instructions informed us would be required, and we anxiously wondered if we should have a few lire left for an occasional frugal meal in Italy when we had paid the necessary dues.

We approached the Customs barrier with much trepidation, to find a cordon of stony-faced and stony-hearted officials drawn across the road, but when they spotted Felix they relaxed into smiles, and then laughed loud and long. We were immediately the best of friends, and, after a cheery ten minutes, we left the frontier, after being treated most reasonably, with our pockets still lined, and the best of wishes from all officials. Felix earned a new collar ribbon that day,

Whilst extolling him, we must not forget the anthem we adopted. It was sung to a tune then very popular, and ran:

*Fe*lix, you *are* our inspiration,
*Fe*lix we'll tell the world that you've been
*Purr*ing softly, *sweet*ly you go
Gliding *for*ward, though the odds are touch and go; oh,
*Fe*lix, your friends would find this journey harder than the tiles.
But, when you've purred your way and won
You may walk and need not run.
Oh, Felix smile through your miles.

CHAPTER II

AMONG "BLACK SHIRTS" AND "LIONS"

WHAT an extraordinary change one finds immediately across the French frontier—a change from the neat trimness of France to the careless and neglected picturesqueness of Italy. Eighty miles of slow driving over a tortuous winding road through Bordighera and San Remo, following the sea-coast the whole way, and we came to Savona, a seaport city of right-angled streets, ugly buildings and badly paved roads. They were so bad that they nearly stopped the steady purr of Felix. The smell of macaroni and garlic was everywhere, accommodation was bad, and service still worse, so we were glad to be up early next morning and off to Genoa.

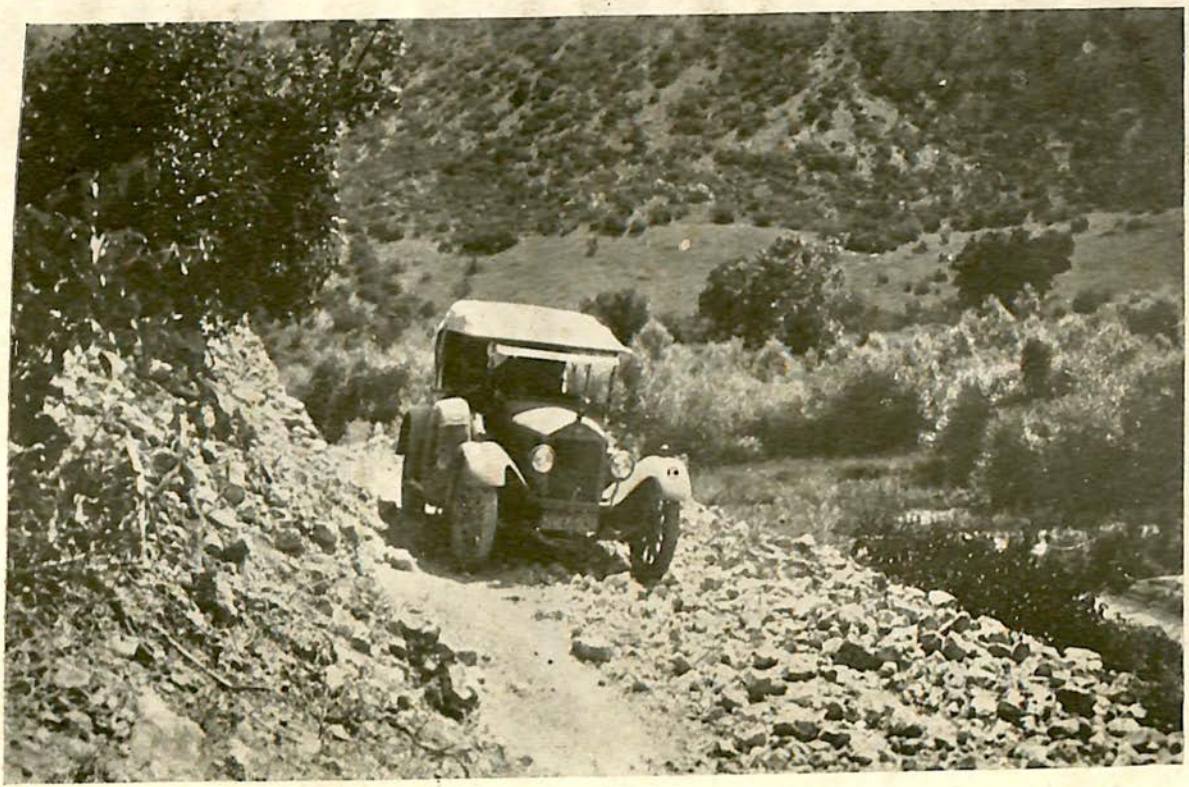
On the Continent, and particularly in the South of Europe, the opinions of the local inhabitants on road conditions are very peculiar. Any straight and level road, even if full of pot-holes or otherwise in disrepair, is to them a good road. A winding road with a few hills, even if the surface is as smooth as

glass, is a bad road. So that, in time, if we were told the road was bad we usually looked for and found it good, and vice-versa. Surface does not count at all with the inhabitants ; all that matters is that the driver can see a mile or so ahead.

By this time, we had covered 1,600 miles, and had not suffered any trouble whatsoever. Our tyres seemed hardly scratched, in spite of our heavy load, and Felix had not even the mere suspicion of a rattle. It is always a pleasure to be at the wheel of a good, smooth-running car, but, so far, we had been running under good conditions. We had our great ordeals to face further East, the difficulties of which were to prove beyond our worst fears.

However, our motto was *Festina Lente,* and at this period we were determined to make an effort to finish our journey without making replacements, and I realised that only by the greatest care, and by treating Felix as a trainer treats a racehorse, would this be at all possible.

From Savona we came to Genoa, the Liverpool of Italy, and a veritable hive of industry.



A "ROAD" IN ASIA MINOR

With the exception of Marseilles, I always regard Genoa as the most cosmopolitan city in Europe, if not the world. As you sit on the Boulevards for half an hour and enjoy an *apéritif*, you can see all the races of the world passing. Chinese, Japs, Indian lascars, African negroes, Arabs, Moors, Turks, Scandinavians, and all the Latin races rub elbows in this great rendezvous of the world's shipping. Unlike Liverpool, Genoa is extremely interesting, both in antiquity of architecture and historical interest.

Again, as in France, everyone seemed to be fully employed, and, as we hummed through the great fertile plains of Lombardy, not on one occasion can I remember seeing an acre of soil that was not under cultivation. Everywhere corn, grapes, maize, and vegetables were being cultivated in profusion. It is argued that our climate is not so amenable for general food-growing as the South of Europe, but surely we could, with proper organisation, find an outlet for our hordes of unemployed on the land. We British were once a race of farmers, and have still the instinct for farming, and, if it is not possible for our little island to be self-supporting,

surely we could do something to guard against a similar situation as that which we had to face in 1914, when three-fourths of our entire food-supply was at the mercy of the submarine.

The black shirts of Fascisti were very much in evidence here, and there can be no doubt as to the extraordinary change Mussolini has wrought in Italy. In 1919, when I last passed through this beautiful country, it was in a bad state. The army and police were corrupted by Socialism of the most rabid Communistic kind; strikes were in progress everywhere; living was dear, and unemployment rampant. Whatever his critics may say of Mussolini's dictatorial methods, it was obvious to the traveller that nothing but a strong dictatorship could have done anything to remedy such a chaotic situation. And now the green vineyards and cornfields, smoking chimneys, and busy harbours, are testimony to the work of that great man who, in a few months, created order and efficiency out of anarchy and chaos.

Next day we arrived at Piacienza through clouds of dust. Although the going was excellent, the roads were a great contrast to

our own tar-covered highways. Italy is not a coal-producing country, and the cost of importing tar for road-making is prohibitive ; so, in the dry season, one must motor in the clouds of dust produced by passing cars, all of which seem to be driven to the full extent of their engine power.

Piacienza, again, is of great interest. It was for the Church of S. Sisto here that Raphael painted the celebrated Sistine Madonna, which was eventually sold to the King of Saxony in the eighteenth century.

The city is still surrounded by bastion forts connected by an ancient wall. The cathedral, which dates to early twelfth century, is of the Lombard-Romanesque style. It has a wonderful campanile, 223 feet high, which is full of paintings by those wonderful old masters, Carracci and Guercino.

Here we had feelings of regret when we realised that to stay and study the beauties and wonders of these delightful old cities was impossible, and on we had to move once more, in the everlasting sunshine of Italy. There is little wonder that we British have the reputation of being a gloomy race, who take our pleasures sadly, for we miss, in our

little island, the greater part of God's greatest gift, sunshine; and the experience of living almost continually under a cloudless sky, such as that which Italy provides, is a great joy.

A happy day's journey brought us to Padua, with its quaint, narrow streets and arcades. Its beautiful cathedral, which is reputed to contain the bones of St. Anthony, and many other beautiful buildings provided much scope for Redknap's camera.

The traffic control in Italy is very difficult to follow. In the country, in most places, you drive on the right of the road, and in the cities on the left, but, at the same time, the tramcars keep to the right—a mixture of rule which is very confusing. On entering Padua we took to the left side of the road, but a passing motorist waved us back to the right. A hundred yards farther on a gendarme politely motioned us to the left. We stuck to the centre, but found that everyone else seemed to be doing likewise, which made it still more awkward. When we found our hotel, I asked the hall-porter what it all meant, and was told that there was no rule, but that everyone went as they pleased.

Though this seems funny, there is a spice of humorous logic in his reasoning in favour of this system, which was that, as there was no enforced rule of the road, everyone had to drive very carefully, and consequently there were very few accidents.

To you, who honour me by reading this small work, it must seem that we were having a happy, lazy holiday, but I can assure you that this was not so. Our days, though pleasurable, were probably much more strenuous than those of a busy business man. Let me give the programme of a typical day.

Up at 6 a.m., we looked over Felix, packed up kit, and reloaded the car (which was no small job, and which we did not trust to others), filled up with petrol, oil, water, and away about 7 a.m. We stopped many times during the day for filming at places of interest, manœuvring for pictures in a hot sun. Lunch at noon, and perhaps half an hour's rest ; off again, to stop at any time between 6 and 9 p.m., very dusty, tired, and stiff. But even then our work did not finish. Felix had to receive the attention and care that were necessary to keep him purring

through those 8,527 miles that we eventually covered. Prevention of trouble, rather than cure, had to be our continual rule. Every nut had to be kept tight, every joint and part regularly lubricated, and kept free from dirt and dust. Even after dinner we were not free, for there were diaries to keep, letters to write, photos to develop, cinema films to change, and a hundred little details to attend to.

On the day when we arrived at Maestre, the town on the mainland that faces Venice, we did, however, rest awhile. First, we tried very hard for permission to run Felix along the railway-line to Venice, which I think would have been the first time a car had been in the city. The authorities would not hear of it, so we deserted him for a few hours, and took the train across.

We hired a gondola, and found the peaceful joys of that romantic craft were great, and the relaxation delightful. We wandered for six hours in the dusk and moonlight through the haunts of the Doges and Borgias, and returned to Maestre thoroughly refreshed, and ready for the run to come on the morrow, which took us through the battlefields on the

Italo-Austrian fronts of the Rivers Piave and Isonzo.

What a wonderful position the Italians held here! We drove through miles and miles of solid concrete trenches, redoubts, shelters, and gun emplacements, stretching as far as the eye could see on either side of the road. There were no obvious signs of any destruction, and the position seemed impregnable. These conditions continued for fifty miles, until we crossed the old border-line of Austria, and rested awhile at the city of Monfalcone.

I have seen the war-ruined cities of France and Belgium springing up anew like mushrooms, but there can be no more sorry sight than this battered frontier-city of Austria. It was still in ruins, and you could imagine that it had been bombarded only a month ago. Heaps of masonry lay where it fell years ago, and a few old, battered wooden huts were intermixed with it, at the doors of which a few weary and dejected-looking families stood and watched us pass without a sign of interest. They seemed to have lost their all, and were too low in spirit to make any effort to recover.

High above the town stands the ruin of a

fine old twelfth-century castle, which, strange to say, had not been touched by a single shell. On again, across the shell-scarred plain of the Carso, we came suddenly upon a complete change of human type and architecture that made us realise that we were now in what was the old Austrian Empire. We climbed a long, long hill, and as we topped the crest we came suddenly upon one of the most glorious sights I have ever seen—Trieste, fifteen hundred feet below us. Every building was of bright and variegated colour; the sea was like liquid sapphires; great liners at anchor seemed like tiny cameos; a gradually-widening streak in the sea indicated a high-speed motor-boat which was hardly visible to the naked eye. A tiny speck of white gradually resolved itself into a large sailing-ship becalmed, and we rested awhile to feast our eyes upon this beauty. An almost perilous descent brought us in less than an hour to the city, a sight of which makes one understand why nations should make such a treasure a bone of contention.

The kindness of Mr. Churchill, the Vice-Consul, and Mr. Hunter, an English resident, made our short stay in Trieste a very pleasant

one, and we left it with regret. Unlike the old Italy, Trieste is seeing hard times. Business has been very bad since the change of rule. The fine harbour is but half-full of shipping, and crowds of unemployed idle away the day on the sea-front. Although claiming to be Austrian, ninety-five per cent. of the population use the Italian language. Our incorrigible humorist, Redknap, had rather a nasty shock the night before we left Trieste. We were dining with some English friends and a very charming Italian couple of title. Redknap sat on the left of the lady, and chatted long through the meal, after which the ladies retired. Our host then mentioned casually to Redknap that the husband of the lady was one of the most famous swordsmen in Italy, a man with over forty duels to his credit, of which at least eight had terminated fatally for his opponent. He also mentioned that only recently the gentleman had wounded a man merely for staring, in admiration, at his wife. These remarks were made quite without thought, but poor Redknap was very quiet and thoughtful for some time, until he felt quite sure that he would not be challenged to

mortal combat. After this, like the perfect diplomat that he always proved himself, he decided that it would be safer to monopolise the husband, which he did to good effect; but I think he was very relieved when the party broke up!

We had a cheery send-off, and moved towards Fiume over a steep mountain-pass, and through magnificent forests of giant pine-trees. The gradients were terrific, and, on one occasion, we dropped at a corner, from level to a descent of about one in four, so very suddenly that we were well on the way down, in spite of locked wheels, before the judicious use of perfect compression and beautifully adjusted brakes helped us to prevent our heavily-loaded car from taking control.

Fiume, the scene of D'Annunzio's coup, is a fine port, but a mean city compared to Trieste. A narrow river separates it from Susak, the Jugo-Slavian frontier town.

The first thing that impressed us was the number of young men loafing about with long hair fluffed out like a lion's mane. We imagined it to be the latest fancy of the Fiume "knuts," but an English-speaking friend

explained that these young fellows were the minions of the poet, and were known as " D'Annunzio's Lions." They exercised an absolute rule over the city. Our friend warned us that in no circumstances should we risk upsetting them, as they used the gun or knife on the least provocation, and that no police or other power in the city was strong enough to control them. Their influence generally is for good, and serves Italy to good purpose, for, as Fiume is still a bone of contention between Italy and Jugo-Slavia, they act as a restraining influence on the covetous Serbs.

It is very obvious to the stranger that the Serbs have more need of the port than Italy. Italy has an abundance of seaports, and Jugo-Slavia has none worth the name. So little commerce is coming to the Free Port of Fiume under the rule of Italy, that only a few rusty tramps were dotted along the fine wharves which once harboured great Austrian liners. Stagnation was complete. The industries that once flourished were dead, and grass grew feet high along the dock railways.

For these preceding lines I must ask pardon for expressing (in view of my very little

knowledge of European politics) an opinion on a situation which seems obvious to the casual observer.

In spite of all the difficulties that we encountered later, our next day was the smallest run of the whole expedition—a quarter of a mile only, from our hotel in Fiume to another just across the Jugo-Slavian frontier at Susak. And what a difference in life we found in those few yards—a change from slackness and stagnation to hurry and hustle; but, to our regret, this activity had not extended to the Customs House.

There is a British Consul in Fiume, whose territory does not extend across the border, but he put us in touch with the Belgian Vice-Consul, who was well known to the authorities there. His kindness and help were invaluable, especially as the Jugo-Slav Customs have the worst reputation of any in Europe for obstruction and extortion. We were introduced to the director at 2.0 p.m. He expressed his great delight in being able to assist us, and said he would hurry us through. Our papers were examined at 2.30, and we walked about and watched the hurrying process with interest.

I think that every official—and there must have been thirty or more there—scrutinised the papers and us alternately. Often one would get up and chat with a visiting friend for ten minutes; another had a short nap in the middle of a mathematical problem regarding the assessment of duty. About every half-hour the chief would come in for a chat and explain to us that only for a British officer could they have accelerated their machinery in this way.

My friend, the Belgian Consul, informed me that a week was the normal time for clearance, so we just left them at it, laid in a large stock of cigarettes, and let matters take their course. We seemed most popular, and the officials apparently enjoyed our company, for even when the transaction was complete they came and chatted, and seemed loath to part with the clearance papers. At 6.45 p.m. we were through, and, although tired of waiting, the delay gave Redknap a chance to film, and Wroe became quite proficient in the Jugo-Slavian language during those few hours.

It has always been admitted that the Serb is one of the world's best soldiers, and our

first impression of the Serbians was excellent. They are of very fine physique, clean, and well equipped, full of quick movement, and extremely intelligent. They are great patriots. Bolshevism hardly exists, and they seem to live entirely for their country and the country's good. The kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slavenes, as now constituted, is no longer a little Balkan State; it is a great power in Europe, and maintains Europe's second largest standing army.

From here onwards our real task began. We were running on roads that were destroyed in the War, and for the repair of which no money has been available. Surface was non-existent, and even the foundations, in many places, had sunk feet deep. However, we found consolation in the glorious scenery. We were in a pine-covered, mountain country, where timber is the chief industry, and we passed scores of sawmills working at high pressure. We were then in the land of the Croats, a fine-looking race of fair-haired, bronzed giants, who always seem happy, whether at work or play. In every working-party we passed the men raised their hats, an

act of courtesy to all strangers, which calls for the same thing.

And now our language troubles commenced. French had never failed us up to the present, but here we were helpless amongst the peasants. We stopped for lunch at a little timber village where only Croatian was spoken, and for five minutes we were in great difficulty. The only word the landlord understood was omelette, and this we eventually decided upon, but, alas, it turned out to be a jam pancake. However, it was quite good, so we left the rest of the menu to him, and thus we secured an excellent meal, which, with good wine *ad lib.*, cost us 60 dinars, or 3*s.* 6*d.* for the three of us—a great contrast to Italian charges. One very marked contrast in this country was the honesty of everyone in dealing with the foreigner, and the entire absence of " stinging."

We arrived that evening at Zagreb, or Agram, the capital of Croatia, and the finest city in Jugo-Slavia. It is of modern construction, with boulevards, wide streets, beautiful buildings, and a fine opera house. It can be described fittingly as a miniature Vienna.

As we moved up the main thoroughfare

we saw a sight at the cross-roads that made us rub our eyes and look again. There before us was the figure of a London Metropolitan policeman, helmet, uniform, presence, dignity, and all. Later we were told that everything in the city is modelled on British lines, and that the policemen are equipped from England, and trained on our system.

We were lucky to run across one of the few Britons living in Zagreb. He fixed us up comfortably for the night in a good hotel and showed us round.

CHAPTER III

INTO THE BALKAN COCKPIT

ZAGREB is a city of music, and the best music at that. Every little café and restaurant has a good orchestra, where, for a copper or two, you can drink a glass of excellent beer and listen to a good concert. The exchange also made living very cheap to anyone who carried the pound sterling or the almighty dollar. We invited our English friend to dine with us that night, and we had a first-class dinner, with a bottle of good wine, after which we adjourned to an open-air variety show such as would not have disgraced the London Coliseum. The evening being warm, we refreshed ourselves occasionally with good lager beer, and the whole evening's bill for food and recreation for four people came to about £1 2*s*.

In Jugo-Slavian theatres, music-halls, and cabarets the Austrian and German tongues are forbidden on the stage, although most of the artists are of those nationalities. Most of them have a knowledge of English, and they

nearly all use this tongue in their performance, and, naturally presuming on the ignorance of most of the audience, they not unusually give vent to their feelings in anything but proper language.

The result of this is very amusing, and to hear Bermondsey swearing intermixed with a love-scene is not without humour, even if crude.

Next day, a hard journey over rocks and pit-holes brought us to Osyeck, a pretty but smaller city on the River Save, where German influence seems to be very strong. Here we encountered our first piece of real trouble, and which, I regret to say, I can only attribute to a vindictive action on the part of someone with no love of the British.

It was my custom to go very thoroughly over the bolts and sinews of Felix every night, and on this occasion, as always, I tried the wheel-bolts and found them tight. The car remained for the night in the courtyard of the hotel, where it should have been safe under the eye of the night-porter.

We were six miles on our journey to Belgrade the next day, and doing only about ten m.p.h., when I heard a sudden grinding.

We pulled up quickly, and found our rear wheel hanging on by one stud and bolt only. All the rest were missing, and the wheel cracked badly. This could only have occurred by someone deliberately loosening the securing-nuts, and the numbers of close-cropped and square-headed gentlemen in the hotel gave me a good idea of the nationality of the "sportsman" who stooped to such a mean action.

We worked for three hours on a shadeless, dusty road, and finally made a temporary repair that carried us back to Osyeck. New studs were made, and we set off the following morning to Belgrade, over an awful track which, in spite of careful driving, continually threw us up to the hood, and left us tired, stiff, and bruised at the end of the day. We arrived at 8.30 p.m. at Semlin, on the Austrian side of the junction of the Save and Danube, a city which faces the Serbian capital.

I was of the impression that a passenger bridge existed between the two cities, but we could not find it. Redknap was asked to wander round and investigate the possibility of passing over the railway-bridge, but returned with the news that its construction

made it impossible for a car to pass. He was closely followed by two Serbian policemen, who, I think, mistook him in his wanderings for an anarchist, with designs on the bridge. Facts were soon explained, and we were informed that a ferry-boat left at 5 a.m. the following morning, and that we could have a barge attached for the conveyance of Felix; so we put up for the night in Semlin.

We were up, and down at the wharf at 4.30 a.m., but, in spite of having advised the authorities the previous night of our wishes, there was nobody about to arrange things.

The syren went once, twice, and, just as we were giving up hope, and preparing to return to the hotel, a very magnificent official, covered in gold lace, and with very sleepy eyes, rolled up, held up the steamer, and took from us the equivalent of ten shillings. We were pushed up the pier, at an angle of about thirty-five degrees, on to a very ancient barge, which was to be towed alongside the steamer.

There were very heavy floods running, and, in mid-stream, where the waters of the Save and Danube met, the connecting-ropes

strained to breaking-point, and we rocked perilously.

Felix threatened to slide overboard, and instinctively we all three hung on to him, determined to drown with him, but, luckily, we reached the opposite bank safe and sound ten minutes later.

But there again we were "up against it," for the high water made the landing of the car at the pier impossible. However, a ramp of four planks was soon constructed, and Felix slid into Belgrade down two planks twenty inches wide, at an incline of about one in three. Try it, if you like excitement, but, believe me, driving a car and load weighing about two tons down a steep gradient on two planks, with a swift river ten feet below, spoils one's appetite for breakfast.

The Belgrade of to-day is very different from the Belgrade of 1914. A ruin at the Armistice, five thousand new buildings have sprung up in five years, and it is on the rarest occasions that you see anything to remind you that here was one of the most war-battered cities in Europe. Everything was thriving, and everyone seemed happy.

The pleasure of inspecting this city is tinged by regret that Britain seems to be taking no part in the extensive work of reconstruction. The millions that Serbia is spending are going elsewhere, and principally to Germany, the country responsible for the destruction. In addition to the ruin of the city, in the whole of Serbia over 2,000 bridges of all kinds were destroyed, most of which have been rebuilt, and yet not a contract of importance has gone to Britain. There is a great field for exploitation here, only waiting for capital, and many Englishmen with moderate capital could do far worse than to go to Jugo-Slavia. The dinar has risen very steadily ever since the war, and the general financial situation in the country is good. Such capital would accelerate the improvement of the dinar, and thereby the purchasing-power of the country.

Between Great Britain and this young country there should be closer economic relations, which would be to the benefit of both, for, as the exchange improves, the Jugo-Slavian imports will increase enormously, and why should we not secure our share in this great and growing market? When one

looks at this new country, and the new territories she has acquired, it is hard to believe that as little as fifty-five years ago Serbia was a part of the Turkish Empire, whereas she must now be classed as a great power in Europe. During our short stay, everyone with whom we came into contact did their best to make things easy for us, and I cannot forget the kindness and courtesy of Monsieur Icpvitch, Chief of one of the departments of the Foreign Office, who telegraphed to every town and village we were to pass through, instructing all officials to do everything they could for us, and I must say everyone concerned responded most wholeheartedly.

It was very strange to be in a country where every cart-horse and bullock took fright at our car. Outside the cities in Serbia, cars are practically unknown, and when we left Belgrade, try as we would to help the peasant, we left a trail of ditched waggons behind us. Before we arrived at the town of Kragnevats, a waggon and two horses were standing unattended in a village street. We stopped some distance away and shouted for the driver to come and hold

their heads. The horses, however, did not wait for him, but bolted. Over went the waggon, off came the wheels, bags of flour and other things were strewn all over the road, and only the discomfort of dragging a wheelless, upturned waggon pulled the horses up. We spent most of our time crawling past terrified animals, and I think we must have lost thirty miles a day through delays of this kind.

The latter part of this journey was through open country and ploughed fields, and we stayed a night at the village of Popovitch. Its last syllable will be an everlasting reminder to us of the place—in fact, it was one long itch. The hunting was excellent, and I do not think we slept for an hour.

Another day of tortuous dawdling brought us ninety miles to Parachin, through what seemed to be a continuous, vast wheatfield, where women and men alike work in the fields in their quaint and picturesque national costume. As in Croatia, music is the national recreation. Every tiny little village has its trio or quartette of musicians, and a like number of women singers. The musicians stand and play, and the singers sit on chairs

in front of them (the reverse of our custom), and they play and sing patriotic songs from dark to midnight. The instruments are a species of mandoline, and the music produced is most fascinating—very similar to that produced by the Hawaiian guitar.

At midday the next day we lunched in the city of Nish, the chief city and commercial centre of Southern Serbia. Here the close proximity of the Orient began to be very noticeable. The water-seller shouted his business, and rattled his brass drinking cup. Several Mussulman gentlemen in the tarboosh sat in front of the cafés and played with rosaries of amber beads. This all tended to create a new atmosphere, and a more fascinating one.

At night we arrived at Pirot, and found that our friends in Belgrade had advised the district Chief of Police, Major Dimitsh Tax, of our advent, and he was waiting to greet us. In Pirot there still remains an industry which, to my knowledge, does not exist anywhere else in Europe, and that is carpet-making by hand. The rugs and carpets are made by girls, who sit cross-legged on the floor in front of a wooden frame with a series of stout

cotton cords stretched vertically on the loom, and which are known as the warp. They have the various coloured wools in small bobbins in front of them, and with this they make a stitch between the cords, each of which they tie into a knot, and cut the end so very quickly that it is impossible to follow their action. When Redknap started the cine-camera there was a general rush to get into their Sunday best, and to deck their hair with flowers, and each and all strove to be in the foreground. It must have been a red-letter day in the lives of these simple country people, and their excitement was intense when they were told that their photographs would probably be shown half the world over. They were disappointed, however, to find that we could not produce the picture for their benefit the same evening.

The next evening we arrived at Tsaribrod, the Serb frontier town, which, before the Armistice, was a part of Bulgaria. Here we completed our formalities with the Serbian Customs officials, and, in charge of a sergeant, we moved off through the Dragoman pass to the town of that name. Since the Balkan War of 1912, and following this last Great War,

the Serbs and Bulgars regard each other with suspicion, and the general policy of both seems to keep a neglected and impassable no-man's-land on the frontier, leaving the railway as the only means of transit.

Our guide informed us that ours was the only car to pass for over a year, and the foot-high grass on a once good road made it obvious that such was the case. It was extremely hard to find the way, and huge rocks peeped out of the grass, and threatened to sweep away Felix's back axle. We had a severe climb, and entered a rocky gorge, when suddenly, we were brought to a standstill by a huge landslide which completely blocked the road with hundreds of tons of rock and earth.

It would have taken a steam shovel days to clear it, but the only way to Bulgaria was either over it or round it, so we had to set out and survey the situation. For the next hour we tramped through the river-bed that ran parallel to the road, and found a possible if extremely difficult way through. Another hour of exciting crawl through water that at times threatened our carburettor, over rock, and through sands and mud which threatened

to envelop Felix, and we emerged triumphant again on to the main road, and in an hour were at Dragoman, the Bulgar Customs House.

Before leaving Belgrade we obtained, through the kindness of the Secretary of the British Legation, a *laisser passer* from the Bulgarian Minister to Serbia, directing everyone to render every assistance to us in passing through Bulgaria.

At the frontier, however, we had a great surprise, and, on meeting the Chief of Customs, he informed us that he had received instructions from Sofia not to charge us with any duty, and, instead of spending weary hours in a dreary Customs House, we were entertained to an excellent lunch, and drank iced lager beer with the whole establishment. These good people all turned out and sent us off with cheers and good wishes, and in two hours, after a fine run through delightful scenery, we arrived at Sofia, to taste again the joy of a comfortable hotel.

Here we decided to give our gallant little car a short rest and inspection. We had trembled for his springs fifty times a day for the last ten days, even when crawling through

stony ruts at three m.p.h. But, then Felix is not merely a car, he is almost a human being, and between us existed an even greater understanding than exists between man and horse. I never asked too much of him, and, in sympathy, he gave his best without murmur ; a willing car indeed !

CHAPTER IV

WE MEET KING BORIS

IN Sofia it was extremely hard to realise that we were in the capital of what was, a few years ago, an enemy country, and I am sure that Bulgaria is not, and never has been, a veritable enemy of Britain. Our warm reception in this city entirely eclipsed anything we had experienced up to this time. Everyone seemed to go out of their way to perform little acts of courtesy and kindness, and to make our stay agreeable seemed to be the aim of everyone, from H.M. King Boris to the humblest menial in the hotel.

In England we always associate this country with King Ferdinand, a sinister figure in European politics, and doubtless his acts of treachery and despotism have reflected on the country and people as a whole. The recent Communist troubles, too, have given a bad impression.

Before we had been in the city for twenty-four hours we realised that the King is the idol of his people, and the most popular figure

in Bulgaria. He is to his countrymen what the Prince of Wales is to us. It is hard to imagine that if our own Communistic party were in power that they would wish our much-beloved and popular King to remain at the head of the State. And yet here, when, for a short time, the Communists held the reins of office, King Boris was asked to carry on. The secret of his great popularity is that he is an unaffected and democratic sportsman. Often he is to be seen driving himself in a powerful car in the capital unaccompanied by anyone but a chauffeur.

On our second day we received word that His Majesty would be pleased to receive us at the palace to inspect Felix, as it was established beyond doubt that he was the first car to arrive in Sofia from London under its own power. The King's secretary called on us, and arranged for an audience to be given two days later. I explained that, as travellers, we were confined to a small wardrobe consisting of tweeds and flannels and were without ceremonial clothes of any description. We were assured that this limitation did not matter in the least, and that any special preparation was quite unnecessary

At the appointed time we arrived at the palace gates, where, apparently, the guard had been advised, for we passed in unchallenged. We were received by the secretary and an equerry who spoke perfect English, and were ushered into an ante-room. Remembering Balkan tradition, I had visions of passing through marble halls and lines of splendidly-uniformed courtiers, to tremble, perhaps, in front of a magnificent throne, to kiss, perhaps, the hand of a King arrayed in purple and ermine, and to be instructed to retire backwards, bowing with much ceremony. In view of the fact that our well-worn flannels had been strangers to a crease for some weeks, I could hardly see us fitting properly into the picture.

After a short delay the equerry returned to say that His Majesty would receive me alone, and that after a personal interview I was to present my two friends and Felix.

I was ushered into a large room, where a charming man of athletic figure rose from a desk and came forward to meet me, took me by the hand, led me to a chair, and said in perfect English, and with the most attractive smile, " Welcome, sir, to my country. I am

delighted to see you." I was at ease in a minute, and it was easy to see the reason of his popularity. I have never met a more charming personality; it radiated kindness, sincerity, a keen intellect, and a charm that was irresistible.

Soon I quite forgot that I was chatting to a reigning monarch, and was completely at ease. On the subject of motoring he is an expert, and an old friend of mine, Don José de Ramiro, whom I have known for twenty years, who is Spanish Minister in Bulgaria and a personal friend of His Majesty, told me that the King may often be seen on his country estates ploughing with a Fordson tractor.

The King went into detail in discussing our route to Constantinople, and advised us to travel by the famous valley of roses (where the attar of roses is made) from Philippopolis to Staras Agora, and to take the southerly road through the forest to that place, and he spent some time describing our route.

When I mentioned that our worst day's run had, owing to bad conditions, been only twenty-three kilometres, he laughed and said, "Oh! that is where I beat your record. On

that same road on a rainy day during the war I made only three kilometres, and shall never forget it."

He told me also that, during the war, he once drove for twenty-two hours on end. "I went to sleep once," said he, "and rolled off the road and turned over, luckily without bodily hurt, but, after getting the car on the road again, I went on." This was typical of the man.

So pleasant was our chat, and so interesting, that half an hour passed like five minutes, and, without ceremony, he led me to the palace garden, where my friends and Felix were waiting, discussing on the way down the discomforts of the old palace.

I asked His Majesty if he would allow the camera man to film him, and to this he readily consented. When we arrived at the car we were introduced to Princess Eudoxie, the King's younger sister, a charming lady, who was as keenly interested in motoring as her brother. They went into every little detail of the car, and both insisted on taking an active hand in examining it, even to separating a tyre from a tube, and trying the self-starter.

Another half an hour passed very pleasantly, and it was with regret that we terminated our audience, bade good-bye, and thanked His Majesty for the great honour he had conferred on us.

I had the opportunity whilst in Sofia to meet most members of the Corps Diplomatique, and all were unanimous in their opinion of Boris I.

He is a great King, as sincere as his father was insincere, and whose sole object is to regain for his country the confidence that was lost when Ferdinand reigned.

That he may succeed in his object is the sincere wish of all who come into contact with him, for he strives to make Bulgaria prosper.

CHAPTER V

THE EAST LOOMS UP

THE morning after our visit to the Palace, as we were about to leave Sofia, I received a call from the President of the Bulgarian Automobile Association, who asked us to delay our start until 1 p.m., as the motorists of Sofia wished to give us a send-off. At midday thirty cars drove up to the hotel, and in the middle of this long procession we left the city. A halt was made in the Central Park, where several speeches were made, and we were presented with a bouquet of exquisite flowers. Ultimately we managed to move off, amid the cheering and handshaking of well-wishers. This was a fitting finish to a brief but extremely happy stay, during which everyone strove to outdo the other in hospitality and kindness; it left with us an impression of the Bulgars that I shall never forget.

We were now on the forest road advised by the King, in beautiful scenery which led us to the town of Samatof, which is situated at

the foot of a range of beautiful mountains, where we were warned of a stiff climb to come. Unfortunately, while we were lunching in the village a terrific storm came on, which ended in a cloudburst. This turned the mountain roads into torrents, so we had to abandon our route, and make for the main road again. We had hoped to make the city of Philippopolis that day, but the weather was awful, and greatly impeded our progress. It was here that the great division between Occident and Orient became obvious, and we were now in territory which, up to a few years ago, was part of the Turkish Empire.

The tarboosh was gradually appearing in place of the hat, the pack animal was taking the place of the cart, the trim, whitewashed villages of the Bulgars were replaced by the shabby, gabled buildings of the East. But the real dividing-line came later in the afternoon, when we saw an odd object lying by the roadside, which, as we approached, made its presence felt. It was a dead horse, surrounded by hungry pariah dogs gorging themselves.

Throughout the East the creed of Mohammed forbids the unnecessary taking of

life, but, although the Mussulman will often massacre whole villages of inoffensive women and children, under the cloak of his religion, he goes to the other extreme with regard to animals. A poor, worn-out horse or donkey, to shoot which would be in reality an act of kindness, is, in the eyes of Allah, a sin; so it is taken outside the village to starve and die a cruel and lingering death, or, perhaps, to be pulled down by hungry, fierce dogs before it expires. In the same way, a beggar will remove vermin from his body and drop it carefully on the ground for someone else to pick up, rather than displease Allah by taking life. To work a mule whose pack-saddle has worn its back into a horrible state of soreness, and to beat it unmercifully until it drops by the wayside, is nothing against the Eastern conscience, but to put the poor brute out of its misery when it drops would be to incur the wrath of God.

That night we stayed at a little village called Banya, and, on arrival, the senior police officer led us to the local "hotel," a filthy hovel where sleep was out of the question. Whether the Oriental is impervious to the livestock with which every inn abounds I

do not know, but, if so, he must be possessed of a skin like cow-hide. Perhaps he is, because a Greek commercial traveller sleeping in the next room to mine did not seem to be troubled, for he made the night hideous with his snores, while I sat up and smoked, taking solace from my old friend, David Copperfield. I noticed the next morning that the Greek had slept in all his clothes, overcoat included, so perhaps the enemy had not penetrated his outer defences.

During the whole night the storms continued, and our route next day was foul with mud, through which we crawled, axle deep at times, and when, tired out, we arrived at Philippopolis, both Felix and ourselves were caked to the eyes. Our progress from Fiume to this place had been very slow, but, in all my experience of motoring in Africa and the East, I had never encountered such conditions as we had to face in this second half of Europe.

War has ravaged these countries again and again, and the recuperative power of the Balkan States is so slow that the highways have all but ceased to exist. Only a first-class car would have endured what we

experienced. Nevertheless, we were very nearly on the outer edge of Europe, without a mechanical defect, and with the air of London still in our tyres. Driving was a continual nervous strain under these conditions, but it was nothing compared with the trials we had to face later in our journey. I was very proud of Felix, and I was confident that he would win through, as here, after running 2,912 miles, most of which was indescribably bad going, he was purring as sweetly as ever.

Storms still lasted, and tropical rain confined us to our hotel for a day, which was unfortunate in a city of such interest as Philippopolis, but the following day, the weather being a little better, we moved off to Hissar, at the foot of the Balkan mountains, and into the famous valley of roses.

Hissar is a most picturesque old town of Roman origin, and surrounded by a Roman wall in a fine state of preservation. It contains many ancient baths, fed by hot radio active springs, which are reputed to have a wonderful curative effect on all rheumatoid complaints, and which are much

visited by invalids from most of the surrounding Balkan countries.

Here we had a bad disappointment, for the previous week a main bridge had been swept away by the swollen river. We tried to make a detour to rejoin the road through the bed of the stream and through some fields, but we sank axle deep in bottomless mud. It took three hours' digging, followed by the laying of a track of brushwood, to get us out; so very sadly we retraced our way to Philippopolis.

Here, again, we were met with the news that six bridges had been washed away on the main road, and that our only chance of progress lay in taking a track that ran south through the villages of Stanimaka, Katunica, and Papazli, to Haskoro, where we could join the main road again. We found that the track between the last two places was through fields, over ditches and large areas of flood water. These sixteen kilometres took us four and a half hours to negotiate, and three of the kilos absorbed two and a half hours of that time.

By a stroke of luck we were passed by a farm cart, which was commandeered and

loaded with all our luggage. This lightened us considerably, and, by pushing, backing, and digging, we managed to struggle to Haskoro, where, to our delight and surprise, we found that the main road was good, and, for the first time since we left Italy, we once reached the giddy speed of thirty-two m.p.h., a happy contrast and a great relaxation, and we arrived at Svielengrad, on the frontier, before dark.

It was a treat to find that all our small party took the hardships cheerfully. The harder the conditions, or the more strenuous the manual labour to be done, the better humour it seemed to create. And so, with smiles and jokes, did we try and surmount every problem that we encountered, always finding great satisfaction in the conquest of a difficulty.

At Svielengrad we came across a very charming man in the major commanding the frontier guards, who lived up to that reputation for kindness which everyone in this charming country had established in our minds. Luckily, he spoke a little French, and his wife a little English. The major placed a nice room at our disposal, and

insisted, also, upon furnishing us with batmen, which was a welcome privilege, and relieved us for once of the heavy work of packing and loading.

Our friends also insisted upon our joining their table, and I found that a Bulgar soldier could be extremely interesting. During the evening the major asked me if I found the Bulgarians very savage and uncivilised. I replied that the reverse was the case, and asked why he should think that I regarded them as such. He replied that friends of his who had travelled in the West had informed him that the British regarded the Bulgars as a race of savages, who practised cannibalism. He was very anxious to know if I had a similar impression prior to visiting the country, and, if so, had it been quite removed.

As usual, on these frontiers we heard that four main bridges had been down since 1912, but that a detour was easy in fine weather, so we set off full of hope the next morning, and arrived at the Turkish frontier post, there to meet our first frontier difficulty with officials.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNCHANGING TURK

WE obtained a *laisser passer* from the Turkish Minister in Sofia requesting all officials in Turkey to allow us to pass without let or hindrance, but, on arrival at the shack which went by the name of Customs House, no one could be found capable of reading it, because, unfortunately, it was written in French. Very few cars ever passed the frontier by way of the road, and the old, ragged Chief of Customs seemed delighted to see us, probably at the idea of drawing a fat duty, a considerable percentage of which might find its way into his pocket. However, I had made up my mind not to pay at the frontier, but to get into Adrianople, where the *laisser passer* might be recognised.

This, we realised, could only be done by exercising the greatest diplomacy. To try to hurry a Turk, to whom to-morrow is the best occasion for everything, particularly business, or to show any signs of irritation, is fatal, so I advised my friends to keep

smiling and follow their leader. The old man took us into his sanctum, where we sat cross-legged on a shabby settee and enjoyed an excellent cup of coffee, conducting a difficult conversation in dumb show. After an hour an untidy clerk brought in a statement which demanded the equivalent of £300 duty on car, camera, film, and other things. Just then I found that the old man spoke a little Persian, so I told him that I regretted that I could not agree to pay that sum, and that if I paid anything at all I should only lodge a deposit transit duty. I said also I did not like the thought of causing him to get into trouble through his inability to read such an important document as my *laisser passer*, particularly as I was now a friend of his, and had accepted his hospitality.

This last effort made him thoughtful, and he asked me what he could do, because, if he let me pass, surely the powers that be in Adrianople would dismiss him for neglect of duty, his children would starve, and he himself would surely die of shame.

I affected to be greatly perturbed at the thought of such a happening, and, after pretending to think long and seriously, I suggested

to him a way by which we could both be satisfied, and yet leave him without shame. That was, that he should detail a sergeant to ride a horse alongside our car into the city of Adrianople, eleven miles away, with a note from him to the Director of Customs, saying that, as our case was exceptional, only the Director himself was fit to deal with it; and, after much arguing, he agreed to this suggestion.

We set off, but, after covering about a mile, we were caught in a terrific storm just as we reached a broken bridge, which, we were informed, was the first of five. We made a detour through the fields to find a way across the stream, and, finally, stuck hard in eighteen inches of mud.

At that moment the sergeant galloped back to us with the news that there was five feet of water in the river at the next break. He had tried to ford it, and in doing so had nearly lost his horse in the swift current.

We were already wet through and thoroughly tired, but, by almost superhuman effort, we got Felix on the road again, and wended our weary way back to the comfortless Customs House, where we changed into

our only spare garments, and hung the others to dry.

Leaving Wroe to guard the car, Redknap and I then set off on foot to survey all the broken bridges, and to find a way through. It was a very dreary eight-mile tramp, and we were soon absolutely dead beat. We found that the first two breaks could be easily passed by making a short detour, but the next three, which were all within a span of 800 yards, presented a problem. Our only way lay through about a mile of swampy country intersected by about a dozen small streams. It was obvious that many days would elapse before the country dried up, and that some organisation would be necessary to get us through, so we returned at dusk to our kind host of the previous night at Svielengrad. Next morning the major placed unlimited horse transport at our disposal. We searched the town, and finally we loaded two army carts with stout planks, and bought a large quantity of strong rope. We set off again, but were beaten back for a third time by the weather. On our return, Redknap went down with a temperature, which soon developed into a sharp attack of malaria. It

luckily responded to copious doses of quinine, and, as he was normal again the next morning, he insisted on pushing on with us.

The previous evening we received news that a band of sixty Communist refugees from justice, who had turned to brigandage, had robbed and killed several travellers north of the main road, so the major insisted on escorting us to the frontier with twenty soldiers.

On arriving at the frontier post, our old friend the Chief of Customs lent us a party of ten Turkish infantry, and invited our Bulgar escort to work in conjunction with them building bridges for us. Thus the first two breaks were negotiated without much trouble. With broken girders and planks we bridged the big stream, and then, by harnessing the soldiers to Felix, we ploughed our way through the swamp.

They would pull us for a hundred yards, until we were resting in mud on our back axle; then they would lift us bodily out, and go through the same process again and again. That mile took us four hours, but patience was rewarded, and we finally got on to the hard ground, amidst the cheers of the Bulgar

BULGARIAN SOLDIERS HELPING "FELIX" TO CROSS THE SWAMPY FRONTIER

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and Turk soldiers. Here we took leave of our kind friend, the major, with much regret. He was a brick, and I am glad to think that we left a small but very solid link of friendship between Bulgaria and Great Britain.

We arrived at Adrianople in another cloudburst, with a foot of water flowing through the main street. The police immediately pounced on us, and we were taken to the office of a very small but very pompous Turkish captain, who regarded us with much suspicion. He questioned me very closely, and, after ascertaining my rank in the British army, was thoroughly convinced that we were only in the country for the purpose of spying. I tried to persuade him that we were harmless tourists, and told him that if he troubled to telephone to the civil authorities he would find that they would probably have advice both from London and Sofia of our coming.

This proved to be so, and we were finally taken to Ennis Behidj Bey, the local representative of the Turkish Foreign Office. He said that he had received a telegram from Angora instructing him to pass us without hindrance, but it contained no instructions to allow us Customs facilities, so we found

and consulted with the Chief of Customs, who still asked us to pay a sum equivalent to £300, which, in view of the *laisser passer* I held, I refused to pay.

Ennis Behidj Bey suggested that we should pay the sum as a deposit forthwith, and receive it back when we left the country in Adana, but my experience of the East had taught me that, although it is very easy to part with money, it is another thing to get it back. I tried to persuade him to wire to Angora, and, in the meantime, to allow us to proceed to Constantinople to settle the matter there with the help of our Consulate.

He agreed to wire, but insisted on my giving my word not to leave the city until a reply was received. During the whole of the wretched five days we were there we were shadowed by the police wherever we went, chiefly because, I think, they still suspected us of espionage. Ennis Bey proved a cheery friend, but a terrible obstructionist, and it is doubly hard to fight obstruction when it is erected with excessive politeness. It was very disagreeable to find ourselves prisoners in a city that boasts of only one wretched hotel and no means of recreation.

We spent one terrible night there in what was an insect Zoo. The beds were colonies of every sort of livestock, and, as we were now in a country where typhus and other insect-borne diseases were rampant, we could not afford to run risks. The weather was too bad to enable us to camp out, but, luckily, we heard that there was a boarding-house kept by a German family on the outskirts of the town, and so we moved to it.

Here we found conditions still fairly bad, but there was a large covered verandah in the front of the house. This we requisitioned, put our camp beds down, and settled in peace, if not altogether in comfort.

Adrianople has had a tragic history. Even in the last ten years it has changed hands three times, and, whereas in 1910 it possessed 100,000 inhabitants, it now contains barely 30,000. The Turkish policy since the coming of Mustapha Kemal has been to expel all Greeks and Armenians. These people constituted the hub of the commerce of the country, and it is hard to see the motive of the Angora Government for such a drastic action, or to discern what good it has done.

Whole streets of shops and houses in the

city were quite deserted, and there was next to no business going on. A terrible atmosphere of depression hung over the whole place, and was, indeed, common throughout Turkey in Europe. It gave one the impression of something dying. The streets were neglected; empty shops had been shorn of their shutters; even the window-frames had been torn out for fuel, and Greek and Armenian churches were doing duty as stables for the Turkish army. The cafés were full of idle youths of the *effendi* class, and nobody seemed to have any interest in life other than the possibility of getting backsheesh from us.

The only busy people in Adrianople were the shoe-blacks, for which Turkey is famous, and there seemed to be more than half the population at this trade. The male Turk would rather go short of anything than be seen in dirty boots, and, even if out at elbow or collarless, the shoes of everybody in Turkey are beyond compare.

I think that it would be an excellent idea to send all the "boots" at our British hotels (whose one ability seems to be in dirtying one's shoes rather than in cleaning them) to this country to learn the business. Whether

you sit down outside a café for a cup of that wonderful coffee that only the Turk can create, or walk along to look at the bazaar, or pause to enjoy the beauties of the grand mosque, a crowd of urchins will inevitably gather round you with the paraphernalia of the shoe-cleaner.

The process of cleaning is wonderful. The thick mud is removed with scrapers and brushes, and then what dirt is left is removed with spirit. Then a dye corresponding exactly to the colour of your shoes is smeared on and brushed well in, and they are finally polished with a wax polish. The result is dazzling, and in five minutes one's travelling brogues can be transformed beyond recognition.

On our second day in the city we met a Turkish-born British subject who was in Adrianople on business. He immediately attached himself to us as interpreter, and confirmed our suspicions that we were being watched. The police convinced themselves that there was some connection between us, as we both arrived in the city on the same day, and our friend was hauled up before the prefect and strictly cross-examined.

Why such nervousness should exist I could

not imagine, but, later, we found that the same suspicious atmosphere existed throughout the country, and many amusing incidents resulted from this, as I will relate later.

After four days of waiting, we found difficulty in keeping our tempers when, every day, the polite Ennis Behidj assured us that news from Angora would surely arrive tomorrow. On the fifth day our patience was exhausted, and we went to the Government House, where I demanded an interview with the "Wali," or Governor of the province. I politely pointed out to him that a telegram had been received from Angora directing the authorities to give us every facility, and yet, on the contrary, no facility whatsoever had been afforded us. I also told him that, in other countries, we had been received as guests, and had never been held up for hours, let alone days. I suggested to him that we should be glad to receive his permission to proceed to Constantinople, to take up the matter of Customs duty with the British Consul-General.

He did not seem at all disposed to grant this, until I mentioned that, as the Special Correspondent of many prominent newspapers

in all parts of the world, I was anxious to speak as well of the treatment I received in Turkey as of that I had received in other countries. This had the desired effect, and in five minutes I was free to leave. In an hour we were away, glad to shake the dust of Adrianople from the tyres of Felix, and made haste to Constantinople.

We were soon in the area of the heaviest fighting that occurred in the great Balkan War, the remains of which can still be seen. Villages lay in ruins, the inhabitants living in wooden huts with rough, thatched roofs. Most bridges were still in ruins, and those that stood were nearly all rough, temporary structures. At times battered trenches and gun emplacements showed up in bold relief in the smooth, undulating country. At Lule Burgas we were held up at the point of the bayonet, and taken to the police office and cross-examined, but this treatment soon became the general thing, and we got quite used to it.

A mile out of Lule Burgas the road vanished completely, and we wandered for miles and miles over plain country through grass a foot high, taking our direction from the pillars of

broken bridges. At each one of these we had to make a detour through the country to find our way across the streams, and at times it was extremely difficult. We arrived at Chorlu after very rough going, and rested for a meal. We were only fifty-five miles from Constantinople, and, as the map showed "first-class metal road suitable for all traffic," we decided to push on.

Curses on that map-maker, for, after seven miles slow going in an hour, on a track which consisted of two deep ruts in loose soil, barely visible in the long grass, we were hopelessly lost! We were making for Silivri, on the Sea of Marmora, and, as we had made slow progress, we wanted to stay there for the night. On and on we went, through almost impossible going, when, luckily we ran across a peasant, who told us we had missed that town, and were ten miles north of it. Tired and hungry, we got him to escort us to Chanta, the nearest village, from whence there was a track to our lost road.

We arrived there, and were half-way through a rough meal of eggs and cheese when along came the police, and we had the usual objectionable inquisition. In the middle of

the trouble I was surprised to hear a voice speaking in the American language, and a friend in need came to us in the person of a farm labourer, a Macedonian Turk. He had spent eleven years in the U.S.A., after which he had settled in Macedonia, but the war of 1922 deprived Turkey of the remains of that province, and our friend of his farm. He had recently been repatriated by the Turks in exchange for Greek subjects in Turkey. He proved a Good Samaritan, and soon satisfied the police about our credentials.

He offered himself as our guide back to the main road, but, as last week's floods had washed away the remaining bridges, all we could do was to strike across country. We moved through fields of grass and corn so high that at times it was higher than our radiator cap, and, after a couple of miles, he seemed lost, and left us to explore.

He appeared to be a very decent fellow, but, as we were completely in the wilderness, I wished to avoid any chance of a hold-up, so, leaving Wroe and Redknap to look after the car, I followed him. After wandering for half an hour we found the track, which could only be recognised by the telegraph poles

running alongside of it, and, guided by the lights of the car, I returned, and found the other two with three more Turkish farmers, one of whom also spoke American, but it appeared that they had had a severe shock. Just after I left them Redknap turned to find that a big fellow with a rifle had crept up noiselessly behind him. He covered him with his pistol through his pocket, and the man retreated, to reappear with another armed man, whom Wroe also covered.

They talked, but, as neither could make himself understood, they whistled, and up came the third man, who spoke American. They were shepherd-farmers, and were guarding large flocks a few hundred yards away against the intrusion of wild animals or their fellow-countrymen. The whole of the country we had travelled through for the last eighty miles seemed almost void of habitation and cultivation, but was well watered, and first-class land for any type of farming. Our friends informed us that the Turkish Government were repopulating it with 100,000 farmer-refugees from Greece. They told us, however, that they were moving, and that their grandchildren would be more likely to

enjoy the anticipated allotment of land than they themselves.

We wished them good luck, and wended our weary way on, and, in half an hour, we came suddenly to the shores of the Sea of Marmora, bathed in the light of the full moon, a very pleasant change of scenery after being land-locked for nearly a month. We followed the beach for a couple of miles, with occasional diversion, and came to a sudden halt at the edge of a swamp that represented the mouth of a river.

Here was a rough causeway of stone built across the river in place of a bridge long departed, but it was in the shape of a letter S, and required most careful driving to negotiate. Unluckily, the stones were very greasy, and poor old Felix slipped into the mud with a squelch. To get him out under his own power was hopeless, and our combined physical efforts failed to move him an inch. The water-level of the previous week was above the level of the steering-wheel, so it was obvious that, if we had a repetition of the recent storms, we stood an excellent chance of being washed out to sea.

In the dark we tried "jacking," but it

was of no avail. We then shifted all our kit twenty yards away to the edge of the sea and made camp, with mosquitoes, sand-fleas, and sand-flies for company. At 2.30 p.m. we tried to get a short sleep, with Redknap on watch. I had only just dozed off when he shouted, and woke me with a start, and I found him trying to persuade three villainous-looking blackguards with two double-horsed carts to drag us out, but they refused to do anything unless we paid them £5.

We would have taken the law into our own hands for two pins, but the fact of being under such close police supervision made it inadvisable to run any risks of trouble. Anyhow, this incident annoyed me enough to make me wakeful, and I kept watch for the rest of the night. Towards dawn two more carts came along. Like their predecessors, they refused help, and I had the pleasure of seeing them both stuck in the mud for an hour following their refusal.

As dawn broke, the sky became overcast, and, to my horror, I saw lightning flashing all round us. I woke the others, and put everything possible out of danger. We worked with feverish haste, and managed

to lift Felix, but luck was against us, and we slipped into the mud again. Although we were almost surrounded by storm, over the valley of the stream we were in, it was clear overhead, and we still kept dry. Had the least rain fallen where we were, it would have taken a week of sunshine to have dried the place sufficiently to enable us to move. But luck was with us. Four more dreary hours brought help in the form of four large donkeys. Felix smarted a little under the indignity of applied donkey-power, but there was no help for it, and, with the aid of the donkeys and five men, out he came. We covered the next forty-three miles of mud in nine hours, and arrived dead-beat at Constantinople, where we put up at the Pera Palace Hotel, and, after a hot bath, slept the clock round.

CHAPTER VII

DAYS—AND NIGHTS—IN TURKEY

On our second day in Constantinople I was chatting to a friend of mine who was resident there. He asked me when I intended to leave; I told him the day after to-morrow, but he laughed, and offered to lay three to one against our ability to get away in a week. He was right. What a contrast there is between this city in 1919 and again in 1924! The present policy is, "Turkey for the Turk, and to Hades with the foreigners."

Rather than help the stranger they will obstruct him in any way possible, and all foreigners, particularly the British, are regarded with suspicion. The Turk is also suffering from a badly swollen head. Having wiped the floor with an inefficient Greek army, he now feels confident of his ability to take on the whole of Europe.

In many ways the Kemalist Government is working very efficiently, and yet, in other ways, it is hopeless; in particular, the anti-foreign policy of Angora is producing commercial

stagnation. There is no trade going on, and the Bosphorus, which once was a hive of maritime industry, is nearly always empty. Many foreigners have closed their businesses and left Turkey, taking their money with them, and those remaining are sitting tight, and neither spending nor risking anything.

We found it extremely difficult to get any help, and, in spite of the fact that the Turkish Legation in London had expressed a desire for us to go through Asia Minor to make a film of the New Turkey, the authorities here seemed reluctant to do anything to facilitate our passage.

For instance, we had a consignment of 5,000 feet of film, to the total value of £45, awaiting us here. The Chief of Customs wished to charge us £120 duty for it, refusing all suggestions of the Commercial Secretary at the Embassy that that sum should be a transit duty, repayable on leaving. We were so disgusted with this meanness that we refused to accept the film, and had it reforwarded to Syria, leaving ourselves with a bare sufficiency to carry us through Asia Minor.

By dint of perseverance, we persuaded

the authorities to agree to a transit duty on Felix, but, as I felt we might have a long delay in re-collecting it when we left the country, I insisted on paying the amount due into the bank, which, in turn, guaranteed payment in the event of the car not leaving the country within three months. The officials finally agreed to this.

Moreover, in consequence of help from the British Embassy, we received a safe conduct through Asia Minor from Adnan Bey, the Kemalist representative at the Sublime Porte.

I think this gentleman regarded us more as madmen than as spies, and did not encourage us at all. "There are no roads in Asia Minor," said he. "Why not put your car on the train? You can cross to Syria in three days, which will save money, wear and tear of the car, and a lot of time." Adnan Bey has the reputation of being one of the most enlightened and progressive members of the Government, and I was extremely surprised when he suggested to me that, where there was a railway, roads could be dispensed with. But, in spite of his remark, it will be seen in my last chapter that he and his friends are now of a different mind.

The greatest tragedy of Constantinople is provided by the Russian Royalist refugees, of whom thousands still remain. Some appear to have brought enough away from their country to enable them to live in comfort, but such lucky ones are in the minority. The greater number of them seem to have lost all hope, and to have sunk into the very depths of despair. I was standing at the door of the Pera Palace Hotel when a very shabby individual passed. He had long, unkempt hair and beard; it must have been months since he washed. His shoes were tied to his feet with string, and he was very drunk. He was pointed out to me as a former Major-General in the Tsarist army, and his case is only one of many hundreds who have fallen so far as to lose even their self-respect.

With the women, conditions are the same; many have to work as waitresses and domestic servants, and one very flourishing restaurant is run entirely by female members of the old Russian aristocracy, who do all the work themselves. They eke out a hard but honest existence, but, sad to relate, for every Russian woman who does so, a score of her sisters go to join the ranks of the unfortunates.

I dined one night at a well-known restaurant where, after dinner and dancing, a cabaret show filled the programme. Partners were there in plenty, and my host told me that among them were five titled women. He indicated one good-looking girl who was sitting alone, and dancing occasionally, but not mixing with the rest of her sex. He assured me that, of all those present, she was the only respectable girl. She was the daughter of a once-prosperous Moscow merchant, who now kept her invalid parents on an income consisting of 10 per cent. of the proceeds of the drink bills of her dancing partners, and, being decent, her earnings were low, for she would neither drink heavily herself nor persuade her partners to drink. This was just one case out of thousands.

To revert to our own difficulties. After days of running hither and thither, and being put off with the eternal "to-morrow," we were told that our *laissez-passer* from the Sublime Porte would be ready by 4 p.m. on the following day. We were told, also, that if we called at the Customs House at midday our clearance papers would be ready. I spent four hours in the Galata Customs House,

while half a dozen officials quarrelled about the proper methods of procedure.

Finally, *six* long entries were made in *six* different books, and, after each entry, I was tramped along to *six* different offices, where *six* officials attached their *six* signatures, and, at length, when I was at the point of insanity, the ancient Turk dealing with my case handed us a paper with only about thirty words on it, which was our clearance certificate.

I returned to find my friends ready waiting, with Felix loaded, but, sad to relate, the messenger who had been sent for the *laisser passer* returned with word that it was too late to-day to obtain it.

As we had given up our rooms, and were ready to move, we decided to cross to the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus and spend the night at Moda, a delightful summer resort on the Sea of Marmora, Redknap volunteering to cross the following morning by ferry to claim the necessary document.

As soon as we arrived at Moda a funny little man of dark skin, and with a bad English accent, who claimed to be a British subject of Maltese origin, attached himself to us.

He was a bit of a nuisance, but rather amusing. As he told us he had served, during the war, in the British army, I asked him what was his regiment, and he replied, "Navy and Army Canteen Board." He also said he had been educated in England, so I asked him at what school. He replied, "I go to Eton, but I finish at Clark's College!!" We then collapsed, and retired to bed with aching sides.

Our *laisser passer* arrived the following day, and, much relieved, we moved off on the old Roman road to Baghdad. This part of it, in Asia Minor, was built by Alexander the Great, and the impression we got was that it had not been repaired since he built it. The route was practically impossible, and we had to run on ordinary earth track by the side of the old road, which could rarely be seen.

The weather up to this time had been our bugbear, and, unfortunately, it showed little signs of improvement. I planned our trip to coincide with the dry season everywhere, instead of which our daily toil consisted of a struggle through mud. I had some light chains made in Constantinople, which helped

us to cope with this difficulty. It was a terrible business putting the chains on and taking them off twenty times a day, but that had to be done, as I could not run on any hard or stony soil with chains, because of the drastic effect they have on tyres, and our stocks of tyres and tubes were extremely limited.

I will try to give an idea of the running conditions we had to endure in Asia Minor, but it is absolutely impossible for anyone who has not had actual experience of them even to imagine what they were like. We did 950 odd miles from Scutari to Payas in twenty-eight days, and our average speed for the whole of our running-time was two and a half miles per hour. On the plains, progress was an everlasting battle with mud, and as for the hills, they were the limit!

At every range we reached we had to revert to the old road. Just try and imagine that the road-breakers, having broken up the foundations of Piccadilly, laid the blocks of broken concrete obtained on a narrow lane with a gradient of about one in five, where it is so narrow that both your wings touch the walls of the cutting, and where you have

a hairpin-turn every few yards. That would be typical of the "going" in Asia Minor. Time and time again we had to unload Felix to get up inclines, and walk back a long distance to carry up our baggage.

Between Moda and Ismid we ran along the pebbly beach, which provided the best "going" of the day, but we were well compensated for our difficulties by the glorious scenery we were passing, and, after eleven hours' crawling, we arrived at Ismid, the new naval port of Turkey.

The notorious *Goeben* was lying at anchor two hundred yards from our hotel. She looked very trim and neat above water, but I was told that she had not been dry-docked for ten years. It was said that she could not steam at more than six knots, and was generally in a rotten condition.

At our hotel we were again lucky to rent the verandah, which gave us an excellent view of the harbour and town. The city is very mean and dirty, but the Gulf of Ismid, alongside which we had been running for nearly a day, must be one of the finest natural harbours in existence. It is a long, narrow tongue of deep water from

seven to ten miles wide, and about sixty miles long, well land-locked by mountains. Ismid lies right at the east end, which is farthest away from the ocean. About thirty miles from the mouth of the Gulf it narrows to about a mile and a half in width for a distance of two miles, making boom defence very easy. There are yet no land defences worth mentioning, but if ever the Turk puts his house in order, and fortifies the Gulf, he will have a naval port so strong as to be invulnerable from the sea.

We moved off to Bilejek under the usual bad conditions, and, about eighteen miles out, in a swampy valley, we had our first mishap, which, although not very serious, came to within an ace of putting Felix completely out of action. I was travelling at about six m.p.h. in long grass about eighteen inches high, with Redknap standing on the foot-board looking ahead for snags. Suddenly he shouted to me to stop. I slammed on my brakes and pulled up in three yards, but not enough to avoid a large rock, which was invisible from the driving-seat.

Our front axle just grazed it, but, as luck would have it, I hit the end of my steering-box

with a noise like a pistol-shot. I jumped out, in a state of fear and trembling for my crank-case, but could see no signs of any damage whatever. Moving off again, I found my steering locked, and only with the greatest difficulty could I move the car a matter of five degrees in either direction. We managed to reach a fair patch of road, and settled down to detach the steering-box, a job that took us a couple of hours. The damage done was to the worm-shaft of the box, at the point where the end is keyed into the steering-column, and it was bent to such an extent that it prevented the column turning. How it took such a knock without breaking was a miracle.

It was obviously a workshop job, so we consulted the map, which showed the next village to be about five miles ahead, and the nearest railway-station about a similar distance. Redknap and I proceeded to dissemble the box, and Wroe walked on ahead to see what the village contained. We were in a marshy valley, with high mountains on each side, the country was covered with low bush, and we were in a most unsuitable spot for an enforced rest, especially as we had been

warned that in this district brigandage was rife. A search for drinking-water produced nothing but very foul water, with green slime alive with mosquito larvæ.

In three hours Wroe returned on horseback, accompanied by a Captain Nouri Beg, of the Turkish Gendarmerie, and an orderly carrying fresh food. The captain told us that Ismid dockyard was the nearest spot where any mechanical repair could be done. We made camp, and Wroe set off on horseback with the damaged part, and a note to the admiral commanding. Nouri Beg spoke only a few words of French, but gave us to understand that it would be extremely dangerous to remain on the road at night. He suggested that we return to his house as his guests, and allow him to place a guard on the car. I explained that we could, in no circumstances, leave our old friend Felix, so he then insisted on spending the night with us, and sent the orderly back for his bed.

While in Constantinople I had had made a light tarpaulin sheet, which, fixed to the hood of the car and spread to three poles, made a tent with room for three beds. By shutting in the far side of the car we could,

under normal circumstances, shelter ourselves and all our kit fairly comfortably. Redknap cooked an excellent meal, which we enjoyed, in spite of our being in a very greasy and dirty state. After this we left the captain on guard and wandered in search of a bath. Alas, although we were nearly surrounded by water, it was all mud and filth, and impossible to use for washing. On and on we walked. For the first time in my life I walked a distance of seven miles for a bath. Finally we found a spring, where we stripped, threw cans of water at each other, and thoroughly enjoyed getting clean again.

As we neared the car, on our return journey, another storm broke, and we raced over the last half-mile to escape a drenching. A gale made our tarpaulin untenable, so we crowded into the car, and for the whole night we were at the mercy of the elements.

To put up our nets was out of the question, and in all my experience in the East and in Africa I have never had such a night with mosquitoes. I think all the winged and biting pests in Asia Minor combined that night to try and drive us out of the country.

Between the storms we lit a fire, which we

piled with green wood in an endeavour to protect ourselves from the pests, but they revelled in the smoke, and came at us reinforced. Sleep was out of the question, and we spent a wretched night, only helped out with the aid of a bottle of whisky. A dull, wet morning revealed three wretched-looking objects. Our faces were misshapen with bites, and our arms and bodies sore where the insects had bitten us through our clothes. About 7 a.m. the weather cleared up, and enabled us to cook a meal and get a nap.

At 3 p.m. Wroe returned with the news that the dockyard possessed no mechanical department that could deal with the job, and he had left the piece with the local blacksmith-cum-mechanic, who had promised to tackle it to-morrow. As I knew it was fatal to leave anything important to any Oriental odd-jobber, and as I knew the meaning of "to-morrow" in the East, after a short night's rest I set off myself on horseback to the nearest station. I picked up the Angora mail to Ismid, and had a pleasant journey with an Englishman whom I met on the train.

I waited an hour while the blacksmith and his assistants quarrelled over the correct

method of straightening the piece, and finally I took off my coat and tackled the job myself.

I was really frightened to put the piece in a fire, but was obliged to take a chance; so, after heating it, I put it in a vice, and, holding a soft copper soldering-iron against the steel, I gave it a whack with a hammer. As the Turk said, Allah was with me, and, by a million-to-one chance, that one whack knocked it perfectly straight. I hastened back to our lonely camp among the jackals and mosquitoes at dusk. After two hours' labour we were ready to move, and next morning, to the chagrin of the pests, we purred on again.

We were extremely sorry to leave our good friend Nouri Beg, who proved himself a real friend in need. As a matter of fact, his kindness to us was most embarrassing at times, for he would never let us purchase a scrap of food. If we expressed a desire for anything, an orderly rode off and produced it in an hour. To have offered to pay would have been to insult him, so in these circumstances we felt obliged to confine our wants to the bare necessities of life.

I have always found the educated Turk one of the most polished gentlemen in Europe, and Nouri Beg was no exception. The more one sees of the Turk, the harder it becomes to understand how he can be responsible for the fiendish atrocities that are attributed to him. I have little use for the Armenian, although he is a very clever man, and the most cultured and gifted of the nearer Asiatics. He is a born conspirator, and, as a political intriguer of the first order, has always been a thorn in the side of the Turk. But, even so, to outrage his wife and daughters before his eyes, and then drive a ten-inch nail through his head, is no civilised way of dealing with a political opponent.

As a psychological study, the Turk will always be an insoluble mystery. As a soldier he is a brave man. His methods of waging war are those of a gentleman, and such as shame the Hun. And yet, where the Armenian is concerned, he is a shameless butcher.

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CHAPTER VIII

WE MEET THE DANCING DERVISHES

THE next day we covered twenty-one miles, and pitched camp at a most delightful spot at a very early hour that was forced upon us by circumstances. At 4 p.m. we crossed the Angora railway at a place where it bridged a river, which, owing to the rains, had become a raging torrent. We crossed the line, and were proceeding along a ledge of rock, through a narrow gorge, when we were suddenly brought to a full stop by a series of landslides that blocked the way completely.

Having noticed an ideal camping-ground two miles back, we returned and settled down, intending to rise with the sun, and obtain from two neighbouring villages labour to clear the road. We could see many peasants working in the fields, so we thought it safe to sleep without guard if we kept our lamps burning all night. The old rule of the East—that light is the best guard against the petty thief—is one I firmly believe in, and has stood me in good stead on many occasions.

After I had been asleep for an hour, I awoke with a start, to find six hefty fellows, all armed with rifles, surrounding us, and an old bearded gentleman talking rapidly to me in Turkish. I covered him with my pistol under the blanket, and woke Redknap, telling him not to shoot, as we were at a disadvantage, there being two to one against us, and we inside our sleeping-bags. Wroe did not wake, in spite of our shouts. One of the men had been a prisoner of war with the British, and spoke a little English. He quickly assured me that they were farmers and not brigands, and that the old man was the headman of the nearest village. They were in doubt about our credentials, and came to the conclusion that nobody but desperadoes would camp out in the open within sight of a village and a roof to cover them.

Explanations followed; our letter from the All-Highest in Constantinople was read; our visitors dropped their rifles and tried English cigarettes. We re-made the camp-fire and chatted for an hour. The old gentleman promised to send a party at dawn to cut a way through the landslides, but, all the same, he did his best to persuade us to go by train,

and I am sure that he and his friends thought us mad for attempting the journey by car. He was as good as his word, and the following morning we found that his men had cut a way through, but had laid on the road all the soft earth that they dug out. We had only a foot of road to spare. A drop of 300 feet into a torrent awaited us if we were unlucky and skidded. Not being tired of life, we were not disposed to take the risk of skidding on the loose earth, so we waited while tons of material were shovelled over the side, and we finally passed along on the hard bed rock.

And what a day we had! You who motor on the first-class, tar-sprayed roads of Britain cannot fail to be interested in the conditions existent here, and the difficulties surmounted by our gallant little British car. When I originally planned this trip I anticipated having to take ship from Salonica to Alexandretta. Had we realised what the conditions were in Asia Minor, I don't think we should have tackled it by land. My diary for this day indicates the nature of our troubles:

5 a.m. Wake, cook, eat breakfast, and pack.
6.10 a.m. Strike camp.

6.20 a.m. Arrive landslide, work till 9.5 clearing road.

9.15 a.m. Arrive at sharp corner of gorge, just wide enough for Felix to pass. Rock 15 inches high sticking up in centre of road. We cannot shift rock, so we collect smaller rocks and build road up to level of big rock.

10 a.m. Deep mud-patches, which we try to rush with chains on, but stick. Standing in 12 inches of mud, we unload and get clear 15 minutes.

10.30 a.m. Hill with gradient of one in five, strewn with loose rocks on surface of loose stone. We walk up hill and remove biggest from path of axle. Drive up and stick hairpin bend, with wheels slipping. After reversing three times, and partially unloading, we manage it, Redknap and Wroe pushing.

11.15 a.m. On apparently hard surface we sink up to axles in mud. Unload car. I put on chains. Wroe loses shoe in mud. We dig our axles clear and collect about two tons of rock to make hard track. Clear in an hour. Redknap purple, also the air.

12.15 p.m. Half a mile through mud-patches and over ploughed fields. Felix's wheels look like discs, being full of mud. Lunch, after covering 6½ miles in six hours. Clean, and scrape mud off clothes.

1.30 p.m. Another rocky hill two miles long. Continually unloading and pushing.

2.45 p.m. After two miles fair going, following road cut into cliff along river-bank. Half road fallen away, and replaced by 6-inch wide beam carrying rotten boards. Return village and are told this is the only way through. Crawl along beam with one inch to spare with torrent 30 feet below.

5.30 p.m. Camp, dead-beat, after nearly three hours more mud and rocks. Total mileage for day, 21, in eleven hours.

The following morning we arrived at Bilejek, which the map described as a town of third-rate importance, but, to our great surprise, we found a complete ruin. Bilejek contained 3,500 houses, and was deliberately burned by the Greeks during the recent war, in which they retreated, leaving only five houses standing. Nevertheless, the town is being rebuilt very quickly. We thought that this destruction might be an isolated instance, but for the next fifty miles all was waste, every town and village having been put to the torch.

We have heard a lot at home about the iniquity of the Turk in burning Smyrna, but this event occurred after the Greek had laid waste Asia Minor. As Greece professes

Christianity, such things as the burning of Bilejek and the district are unnoticed by us.

From Bilejek we struck a short military road built by the Greeks, and the going was good.

Just before we arrived at Afium Karihissar we passed what I always feel is the absolute dividing-line between East and West—a camel caravan. As we approached the city over a long, dusty plain, the caravan was stretched out in single file almost on the horizon, and crossing our path at a right angle. The effect, in the dusk, was very beautiful, and the sound of the bells of the leading camels is always sweet music to a real lover of the East.

Afium Karihissar is a big military centre, and, to our great surprise, contained a good hotel, which was very welcome. Almost as soon as we arrived we received a call from the Colonel Commandant of the Corps Artillery stationed here. He took us in hand and introduced us to the local restaurant, which seemed to be also a senior officers' mess. He was a quaint old character, a curious mixture of the old Abdul Hamid school and the present modern movement. He was a

great Anglophile, and made us very comfortable. It was a very cheery evening that we spent with him and his staff.

Although the general policy of Turkey is extremely anti-foreign and very Anglophobe, the officers of the army seem distinctly Anglophile. This applies particularly to the older men, who have fought against us. One thing was most marked, and that was our extreme popularity with all ex-prisoners of war.

At nearly every village where we stopped during the daily run, someone would rush up and inquire if we were British, and, on our replying in the affirmative, the invariable answer was, " Me English prisoner two years, sir ; English very good : give plenty food and no work." We were fed by these people again and again, and afforded every courtesy, and in no instance would they accept payment for any food we ordered. I was surprised to find that they had no use for their old allies, the Germans, who were very unpopular.

At dinner that night the old Colonel rose and toasted England. All the officers rose and received the toast most cordially. I

responded with "Turkey." The old man, under the influence of a good dinner, began to expand, and whispered to me that he longed for the good old days of Abdul Hamid, when Britain was Turkey's big uncle. He said they were facing a tremendous task in trying to rebuild an Empire out of ruin, after twelve years of continuous war, which had impoverished the country, both in men and kind.

The ruin is, indeed, great, and, in justice to the Turk, I must say that, if a tenth part of Turkey's misery were known, she would not be so condemned and despised for her reprisals. On the whole road from Bilejek to Afium Karihissar I have never seen so much wanton destruction—not the ruin caused by Greek shot and shell, but by deliberate and wanton burning, and on that road hardly a house escaped the Greek torches.

I was chatting with a Turkish gentleman who had lost nearly everything but his spirit. He told me that every individual, poor and rich, had emptied their pockets to the last piastre to help to rid their country of the Greek invader, and the result, at least, is a united nation all working for their country's good. Everyone appeared to be working,

and, in contrast to Turkey in Europe, there was no idleness in either town or country. Even the peasant who is living in a rush-roofed hut, by the burnt ruins of his home, is getting the best out of the land, with such crude agricultural implements as the local blacksmith can provide. German, American, and French commercial travellers abound, and I looked about in vain for signs of a Briton. Building materials, agricultural machinery, cotton-cleaning machines, tools, and, in fact, everything of use in commerce and industry, are coming into Turkey from France, Germany and America.

We have lost another market, and I was informed by an Englishman who was representing an American house that the reason is that, whereas other countries give credit, Britain will not. My informant had, in three years, increased his turnover ten times, and had not made a bad debt. Surely it is about time we improved our commercial intelligence system, and made full use of our Department of Overseas Trade to enable us to get our own workshops busy, and competing in these many great markets where our goods are wanted.

We had a little oiling and greasing to do to Felix, and we did not leave Afium Karihissar until 1 p.m. During the whole afternoon we were passing through beautiful country, which was well wooded and watered. We decided to camp at the first suitable spot we struck after 5 p.m., but, just before that hour we suddenly left the wooded country and got on to a waterless plain. We kept going until it was nearly dark, and, as no favourable spot appeared that would give us fuel and water, we stopped at a tiny village near the track and filled our water-cans at the local wheelwright's shop. The good man allowed us to clear the floor of his workshop, so, with a sack full of small wood and shavings, we moved out three miles and pitched camp on top of a small hill. The ground was very rough and stony, and abounded in scorpions, tarantulas, and every jumping insect. My comrades turned in, but the place did not please me. I felt disinclined to sleep, and lay reading for some time, until I dozed off to the music of howling jackals.

Suddenly I wakened to the noise of galloping hoofs, and a large deer raced through the camp, pursued by a great wild dog.

Redknap also wakened, and the sudden shock kept us awake for a while. Apparently the deer won the race, for the dog returned, bringing a large crowd of friends, who sat round the camp and kept up a terrible din for two hours. We refrained from shooting, as we had passed several ugly-looking crowds on the previous afternoon. I could see several camp-fires round us, and shots might have attracted inquisitive strangers to us. We had a very uncomfortable and sleepless night, and it was obvious that the question of keeping watch at night must be seriously considered.

Individually, these dogs are not dangerous, but collectively I have known them attack human beings, and, as will be seen, Redknap had a very nasty experience a few nights later. At the same time we were having such severe physical labour during the day that good rest was absolutely essential at night, and to interrupt sleep with watches would not tend to increase our physical fitness. Wroe, I think, would sleep while his throat was being cut. Redknap was a fairly light sleeper, but, luckily, continual travel has blessed me with the faculty of getting sound sleep with one eye open.

We struck this disappointing camp at dawn, and five hours' driving over rocky hill-country brought us to the edge of a vast plain, where we had a beautiful view of the city of Konia, the ancient capital of the Turkish Empire during the Selducian Dynasty. It was a fine sight, with its golden domes and minarets peeping above the poplar groves.

The city is of great interest, and contains the famous mosque of Turbaie Hadrah, which is run by the "Mehlevi" dervishes, and contains the tomb of Djellal-ed-din Rimi, who founded the sect in the seventh century. The mosque is surrounded by a dervish monastery, and, by the kindness of a Turkish friend, we were privileged to view the mosque, the tombs of the founder, and of all the succeeding heads of the sect.

We were entertained to coffee by the father superior, a benevolent old gentleman in spectacles, who conducted us personally round the mosque. He showed us the old polished floor where the traditional religious dances have been held for centuries.

The dances are a great test of physical endurance. The principal feature of them is for the dancer to spin like a top, at terrific

speed, for fifteen minutes at a time, and it is hard to imagine that any of the dignified old monks we saw could work themselves into the frenzy of this strange religious rite. Strange to say, they are the least bigoted of all Mussulmans, especially where Christianity and contact with Christians are concerned. The chief characteristic of their religion is charity, which, with them, is not a mockery. All their money, with the exception of that required for the barest necessities of life, is given to the poor.

The interior of the mosque is extremely beautiful, and is in perfect condition for a twelfth-century building. Luxurious carpets completely cover the floor, the walls are decorated with illuminated texts from the Koran, and priceless wall-rugs hang everywhere. The tombs of the departed saints are of beautiful tile-work, in a state of perfect preservation, and the turban of each man lies at the head of each tomb, ready for its occupant to reassume on the day of judgment.

CHAPTER IX

LAST DAYS IN ASIA MINOR

THE eternal bad weather still dogged us, and made our journey a continuous mudlark as, during the next few days, we wended our way slowly toward the Taurus Mountains. About a day before we reached Eregli we made our camp about 400 yards from a village, and that night Redknap had a very nasty experience. We had just finished our evening meal, and he wandered over to the village spring to get rid of some of the day's collection of mud.

Half-way there he was attacked by a herd of about a dozen pariah dogs, led by one huge Bessarabian sheep-dog. Hearing the noise, all the village children collected beyond the dogs, and Redknap was too frightened of hitting them to risk using his pistol. Luckily there were plenty of large stones about, so he armed himself, and kept his face towards the leader. They made a rush at him, but he aimed well, and hit the big fellow in the chest with a piece of rock. This cooled the hound's

courage, and the rest hesitated and waited. They made a circle round him, and every time he moved they did also. They gradually closed in, but he used his stones to good effect, and delayed matters until, hearing the noise, the villagers arrived and drove the dogs off.

As the wind was blowing away from camp, we could hear nothing, and Redknap returned still unwashed and very shaky. We also decided to remain unwashed until daylight rather than risk being eaten.

Here, day by day, we were moving like a ship at sea, on no defined track, taking our directions on the plains by compass, and wandering along the foot of the hills to find a way across.

We had already encountered 120 broken bridges, and, in nearly every instance, we had to make a detour to pass them. We gradually got resigned to this "tank" work, and felt quite elated if conditions enabled us to cover forty miles in a day.

I was more than delighted with our wonderful car. Felix had taken all the trouble without turning a hair. He revelled in all our difficulties, and seemed to be one with us

in our determination to bring the trip to a successful end. So far, I had not changed a plug, and his sweet running was like music to us. We had only had one puncture up to now, and that occurred when we picked up a horse-shoe in Paris.

Felix had already broken many motoring records, and had completely vindicated my theory that, for such conditions as we had met, nothing could compare to a well-built British car, as, unlike the flimsy and too flexible American car (whose chief point of credit is ready changeability of spares), it can stand up to any work and needs next to no spares.

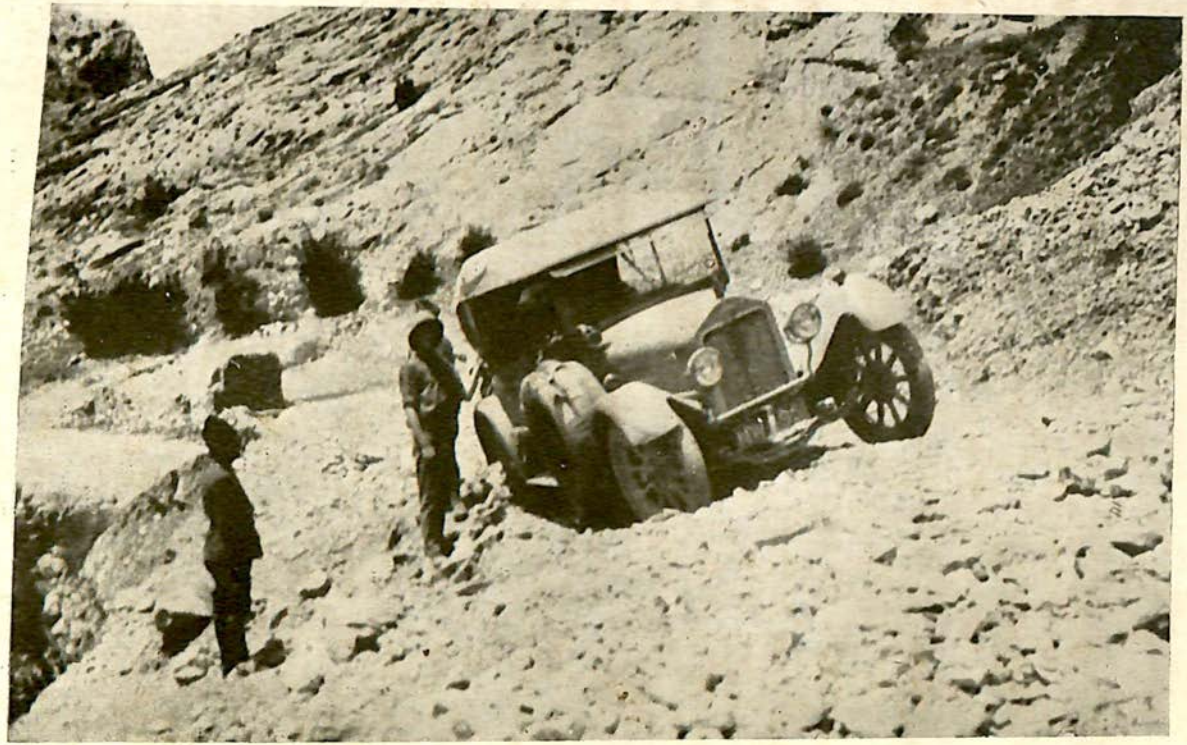
At Eregli we seemed to have passed the limit of the rain, and, at the eastern end of the great plateau, we had a welcome change to dry going. When we arrived at that city we ran right into a dust-storm. In a second it was as dark as a November day at home. Our eyes filled, and our skins were soon caked with a coat of brown, through which only our eyes and lips showed naturally. Everything was covered. It got into our food, our pockets, our suit-cases, and even into our tobacco-pouches. Luckily, these storms are

nearly always local, and this proved no exception to the rule, being confined to the city. Outside the city all was clear.

Since we left Europe and hotels, with few exceptions we had lived entirely on the country. Our food had been the food of the peasants, and nearly vegetarian. Not that any of us were vegetarian enthusiasts, but I firmly believe that "When in Rome eat as Rome eats" to be a sound and sensible rule.

There is very little else but unleavened bread made outside the cities in Turkey, or anywhere else in the Middle East. It is made of roughly-ground, wholemeal wheat, mixed with salt water, and rolled into flat cakes the size of a large dinner-plate, about one-eighth of an inch thick. These are thrown on the walls of a hot clay oven until brown, and are very good, especially when eaten fresh. When dried for a few days, they make an excellent emergency ration—like a biscuit.

Curdled milk was another staple article of diet. This is the finest preventative of any of the stomach diseases that are so prevalent in the East and in other tropical countries. An old friend of mine who spent twenty-eight



A BAD LANDSLIDE, ASIA MINOR

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years on the West Coast of Africa used to say that if a man ate curdled milk every day he would live for ever. The Turks also dry the curd and press it into a mould, a process which converts it into an excellent cheese. Unleavened bread, curds, cheese, eggs, cucumbers, and tomatoes, were our chief diet, and we ate so many eggs that it would not have surprised me had we begun to grow feathers. Redknap said that he could not look a chicken in the face on account of our continual egg diet, but we kept very fit and well on it.

Ula Kushla was our objective, and I must make mention of this day's run, which proved a record up to the present. Twenty miles from this place the track disappeared, having been washed away, leaving a twelve-foot drop. As leaping was not yet one of Felix's accomplishments, we returned and made our way to the end of a small valley, where there was some sign of the passing of animal transport. The foothills at the end of the valley steepened, and we suddenly came on an alternative track which went straight up a hill of loose, decomposed limestone, at a gradient of one in three.

We got out, walked up, and surveyed it. To climb it appeared an impossible proposition. We consulted our maps, but they, and a view of the conditions of the surrounding country, proved it to be our only route, so we had no alternative but to call on dear old Felix for an extra effort.

Posting the others at the critical points with bricks to scotch the wheels, I made a rush at it, but the engine stalled on the loose surface in the last fifty yards. Another effort took us one yard forward before I stalled again. We covered that 350 yards by starting the engine, accelerating, jerking in the clutch, and moving inches at a time. Sometimes we moved a couple of yards, and every time we stopped we had to scotch the wheels quickly. The last ten yards were covered in fifteen jerks, and we all cheered when the last move but one advanced us three yards.

We had to clear the surface of huge rock before we started, and my friends pushed all the time. Once we started, it was impossible to retreat, as we had a sheer drop of 200 feet on the left, and a wall of rock to the right. We did the 350 yards in two and a half hours.

When we reached the top we were all exhausted, and, although I was the least worked of the party, I felt absolutely done. I revived the others with our last drop of whisky from the emergency flask, and well they deserved it.

When we arrived at Ula Kushla we found that it was a very tiny village by the railway-line, which had been converted into a concentration camp for Greeks who were being repatriated to their own country in exchange for Turks under the Turco-Greek treaty of peace. About 5,000 men, women, and children of all stations of life were camped there, and daily train-loads of cattle-trucks were conveying them to the Greek frontier. We were too tired to make camp, and every nook and corner seemed occupied. On the production of my letter from Adnan Bey to the O.C. Troops, he produced two very dirty rooms in a still dirtier caravanserai, which was so filthy that our first hour the following day was spent in exterminating live stock which had gathered in our camp-kit during the night.

During the War, the Germans built a road from here across the Taurus Mountains, but

this was before the Taurus tunnel was completed. Next morning we were on the remains of what had been a fine military road, but which now varied from indifferent to bad. The railway, which is part of the Berlin-Baghdad scheme, is a wonderful piece of engineering; we were now following it, and continually passing under and over it.

We stopped about 6½ miles from Bozanti Khan, at the foot of the Taurus Pass, and had a short chat with the station-master at a village station. He gave us a very rude shock by informing us that four miles on there was a series of enormous landslides, which we could not possibly pass. This depressed us considerably, but, as it was the only way to India, we pushed on, the trouble to see for ourselves. We came across several obstructions, which we manipulated with some difficulty, and, as our speedometer then showed that we had come six miles since our warning, we were congratulating ourselves that these were the obstacles referred to, when, as we turned a corner, we were stopped dead by a block which must have contained tens of thousands of tons of rock and earth. The force of the slide had taken the road with

it, and an attempt to remove the debris would have been a month's work for a steam shovel.

In the lowest part there was a climb of sixteen feet to the top of the debris, and there were from seventy to eighty of huge rocks to run over, while immediately to our right was a drop of twenty-five feet into the river. I put Felix at it in an effort to climb, but the car stuck, and every time I tried to move again, to my horror we began to slide towards the precipice. Three more efforts to move up only skidded me still nearer the edge. I had the "wind up" badly.

A Turkish gendarme sergeant suddenly appeared, and helped us with useless advice. He consoled us by his assurance that the next time my wheels moved I should skid into the river.

We found that he had five soldiers at a post about a hundred yards away, so I suggested he should fetch them to help to tow us, but he absolutely refused. I then produced the "Open Sesame" from Adnan Bey, and it had a magical effect on him. He drew himself to attention, saluted, ran for his men, and was profuse in his apologies for his lack of help. We harnessed the soldiers to the car, and,

inch by inch, we pulled over the obstruction and out of danger. Those sixty yards took us an hour and ten minutes.

We were soon out of the gorge, and arrived at Bozanhi Khan, where we came suddenly on a magnificent view of the Taurus Mountains. It was Switzerland. Pine forests stretched in every direction for miles and miles, and right up to, and beyond, the snow-line on the mountain-tops. Waterfalls were crashing down the mountain-side from a great height, and it was one of the most magnificent pieces of scenery imaginable. As we climbed the great pass, and gradually overlooked the plains, the view defied description.

Traces of the war were now obvious, and we passed the remains of many German lorries that had "gone over the side." We crossed the range at an altitude of 9,000 feet, and began the long descent to the plain of Tarsus. At 5,000 feet we camped on the remains of a great German Engineering and Transport Depot. It was a pleasant spot, well watered and timbered, and we had a good sleep without our nets, in a country free from mosquitoes, and where the bracing

mountain air was as tonic as champagne.

Next day we wended our way through the Cicilian Gates, past the great triumphal arch built by the Emperor Justinian, and on to the tropical plains, to the famous biblical city of Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia. It was here that Antony received Cleopatra when, as Aphrodite, she sailed up the River Cydnus in magnificent luxury. It was also the birthplace of St. Paul, who received most of his education here. After the decline of the Roman and Byzantine power, during which it was one of the greatest commercial centres of those Empires, the town came into the hands of the Turks and fell into decay. Even now, in its squalid state of semi-ruin, it is still an important centre of commerce for wool, cotton, and hides.

We arrived that afternoon at Adana, and, by chance, I met an old American friend—a Mr. McDowell, who was in the British service in Persia and the Caucasus during the war. He is very busy pushing the products of Henry Ford in Adana, and put us up for the one day that we spent in the city. He strongly advised us not to take the coast road from Adana to Alexandretta on account of the

continual brigandage that was occurring, and, to prove the soundness of his advice, he brought a native chauffeur up to see us. This man ran a Ford round about the city and outskirts, and told us that on this side of the frontier he had been held up three times in the last six months, all his passengers being robbed on each occasion. He advised us taking the inland route, via Eintebbe, which meant covering a distance of 180 miles more.

We should have been glad to act on this advice but for the fact that our Turkish Customs discharge was made out for Deirtyol, the frontier station on the coast road. So, in spite of visions of being robbed and held to ransom, we were obliged to take the dangerous route.

Our American friend brought an escort for us as far as Missus, another ancient city famous for its Roman and Selducian ruins, and here our troubles commenced again.

We forded a river near one broken bridge successfully, but within six miles of Toprah Kale, where we intended to camp, we were held up by another break over a swift stream. We explored it well, and put Felix at it at the most favourable place, but, although

our front wheels just touched the far bank, the rear wheels stuck in the loose shingle of the river-bed. Felix immediately acted as a breakwater, and in ten minutes the whole under-water part of the car was a concrete mass of sand and shingle.

Wroe went off to find bullocks to pull us out, and Redknap and I cleared the car of baggage, and tried to clear away the silt, but, as fast as we shovelled it away, more came. We then waited, and, having a book of trout-fly with me, we improvised rods from bamboos growing by the river, and with the aid of cotton from our mending outfit we killed six useful trout for tea.

Wroe returned in three hours with a peasant and a pair of huge buffaloes, and, although they were strong enough to pull anything, they could not move us, and only broke their yoke in trying. To clear underneath the car was impossible in the rushing water, so, as we could not move the car, our only alternative was to move the river. Cutting branches of trees, and collecting huge turfs, we set to work and built a ramp round the car, and then dug a new channel through the bank for the stream. As soon as the

water left Felix dry, we cleared the axle and wheels, and, after three and a half hours' hard labour, which skinned our hands and feet, the car came out with the help of the oxen, and we arrived at Toprah Kale station, where we slept.

Now came the dangerous part. Next morning we crawled through twenty-two miles of trackless, bushy plain and hill, a distance that took us six and a half hours, and how we escaped destruction during that time I don't know. Hung up on tree roots, twisted all shapes in dry water-courses, I trembled for our frame a hundred times that day before we fetched up at Deirtyol at the Turkish Customs House, where formalities only lasted a few minutes. This place is pronounced "dirty ole," and lives up to its name. It was here that the worst Armenian massacres took place in 1910, when thousands were slaughtered.

Following directions, we moved off across the plain of Issus, where Alexander the Great fought and beat Darius, King of Persia. We followed a footpath for miles over rocks and ruts, until a huge rocky gully 150 yards across, and about forty feet deep,

brought us to a full stop. For three hours, in the burning sun, we hunted for a way across that gully, and finally, in despair, I turned back to Deirtyol, intending as a last resort to take to the railway-line, when we spotted a faint track which led us in the direction of the sea. Many times we lost it, and had to walk about to find it; anxiously we followed it right on to the beach, where, to our joy, we found a cart-track.

In ten minutes we reached Payas, the actual frontier, where the beautiful old ruins of a Roman castle gave us a pleasurable half-hour's photography and a good rest.

All along the road, for fifteen miles, we looked anxiously for the French outposts, but saw nothing until nearly at Alexandretta, when we were suddenly pulled up by a Senegalese sentry. A fussy little French sergeant came up and ordered us to return to Payas, to obtain a certificate of entry from the frontier guard.

I told him that we had looked very carefully, and that, as we saw nobody, the guards were probably asleep. I told him we were dead-beat, and absolutely refused

to return, and demanded an interview with the Commandant, a charming gentleman who kindly waived the point and allowed us to proceed. Ten minutes later we were in Alexandretta, where Mr. Catoni, the British Consul, took us in his charge and made us most comfortable.

That night as, with my host, I drove Felix along the sea-front boulevard at forty m.p.h. (a speed we had not touched for two months), without a creak or sound of any kind, and with our engine purring sweetly, Mr. Catoni, who knew something of the conditions we had had to contend with, described our dear Felix fittingly in three words: "What a thoroughbred!"

Thank God we were through Asia Minor! We were the first car to cross it, and I venture to prophesy, also, the last, for a long time.

CHAPTER X

OUR DASH ACROSS THE DESERT

OUR stay in Alexandretta was unavoidably prolonged. We assured ourselves, when leaving Constantinople, that our agent was forwarding the spare film to us by steamer the day after we left, and this should have been awaiting us here for three weeks. We were reduced to about 1,200 feet, a very small quantity to suffice us from here to Baghdad.

We sent wire after wire, with no result, until, after a wait of twelve days, in desperation we sent a wire to Constantinople requesting the Commercial Secretary of the Embassy to investigate the loss.

He did so, and replied that the agent had not yet shipped it, and, as the next boat did not arrive for ten days, and we dare not delay longer, we had to make a move. Although the enforced wait was very tiring to us when so anxious to get on, we had a very cheery time in Alexandretta. It is a pretty little seaport in the extreme northwest corner of Syria, and, although a very

unhealthy town under Turkish rule, it has been well drained and much improved since the French occupation. The British colony consisted of two people only—Mr. Catoni, junior, the Consul, and a Mr. Beard, general manager of Messrs. McAndrew Forbes & Co.—and these two good gentlemen gave us a delightful time.

Mr. Catoni, senior, was in England on holiday. Concerning this gentleman there is told an interesting story of heroism shown by him during the Armenian massacres, an act which has made him a national hero of that race. In the year 1908 Abdul Hamid signed a decree ordering a general massacre of the Armenian community all over Asia Minor and Syria. Ten thousand Armenians in Alexandretta heard this news, and sent a deputation to Mr. Catoni asking him, as British Consul, to protect them.

He interviewed the Wali, or Governor of the city, only to hear the idea of an organised massacre ridiculed as absurd. Nevertheless, Mr. Catoni was not satisfied. He communicated the news to the commander of a foreign warship lying in the harbour, but that officer also pooh-poohed the idea. Next he

telegraphed to the British Government asking for a British warship, but found that it could not arrive until after the time appointed for the foul butchery. And the time was perilously close. Veiled Mohammedan women went through the city and bazaar, marking the door of every Christian Armenian house.

This spread terrible panic among the Armenians, and they came in thousands to take refuge in the Consulate grounds. Mr. Catoni again approached the Governor, who still denied knowledge of any proposed massacre, but admitted that he had heard rumours to the effect that the Mussulman population might rise against the Christians. In that event, he said, he regretted that the forces at his disposal were not strong enough to prevent any untoward happening.

Mr. Catoni saw only too clearly that his worst fears were justified. He insisted that the Wali take immediate steps to prevent any massacre. The Turk, however, was vague and ambiguous on the point. Mr. Catoni returned to the Consulate, sent his family on board the foreign warship, and returned to the Governor. He requested a private

audience, and made a last urgent appeal to him. Still the Governor was shifty and indefinite. Finally, the British Consul realised that the time for words was over. He whipped out a revolver, and told the Governor that, unless he gave immediate orders to safeguard the Christian community, he (Catoni) would shoot him, and then commit suicide, warning him that at any attempt at treachery he would act on his word.

This put the fear of God into the Wali, who immediately sent for one of his staff and gave the necessary orders. Nevertheless, revolver in hand, Catoni remained with the Governor until a British warship arrived and landed a party with machine-guns. I believe that our sailors were met on the beach by thousands, who wept, and went down on their knees and kissed the sailors' boots. Elsewhere appalling butchery took place, but, thanks to the heroism of our gallant Consul, ten thousand lives were saved in Alexandretta.

At the back of the city, in the mountains, there are several delightful summer resorts, where, in an hour, one can get far away from the tropical stickiness of the coast, to cool,

perfect weather. From Nargisleek, where our kind hosts lived, we could see the snow-capped Taurus Mountains, and nearly two hundred miles away to the south-west I once sighted the island of Cyprus.

We left Alexandretta with a feeling of relief, and our friends with regret. Our next objective was Aleppo, over the great Beilan Pass which rises from sea level to 6,000 feet in nine miles. As we descended again to the great plain, we got a glimpse of the Lake of Antioch, where St. Peter fished, and, in an hour, we were facing the scorching hot wind on the plain.

Suddenly every type of life changed, and we found ourselves in a different land. The flowing head-dress of the Arab displaced the fez, and large and long camel caravans from all parts of the East continually passed us, laden with rich merchandise—cotton and silk, the wonderful carpets and rugs of Central Persia, and an abundance of other things. I recognised the Arab of Monsul, the Persian from Meshed, and the Turcoman from the far Bokhara.

The country was most unfertile, and we passed over miles and miles of bare rock and

sand, through a hot wind that seemed to shrivel up our skin to the likeness of parchment. The going was good, and, after six and a half hours, we breasted a long hill, to see a monument by the roadside commemorating the last battle fought in the Great War in the Middle East—a cavalry action between the British and Turkish forces. Twenty minutes later we passed under the shadows of the ancient citadel at Aleppo.

There were two alternative ways to Baghdad open to us here—one direct, along the bed of the River Euphrates, where water is found at regular intervals, and the other via Damascus, two hundred miles south. By the latter route we should have to cross the Great Syrian Desert, a distance of 548 miles, with only one well *en route*. This is also the track on which the desert mail runs once a week, carried by huge, high-powered American cars, which dash across at an average speed of thirty-five miles per hour, carrying with them all the petrol and water needed for the whole journey, and relying on their high speed to protect them from attack by Bedouin raiders.

On this route we decided to travel, as a visit to Damascus, Lebanon, and Beirut would add greatly to the interest of the film, although for a low-powered, heavy-laden car it was something of a risk. About three hours out of Aleppo, on the road to Damascus, we came across the extraordinary sight of a huge American tractor-plough being demonstrated to a party of Bedouin sheiks, a sure sign of the progress of civilisation even in mid-desert.

At this time of the year large parties of Bedouin Arabs pass from the deserts of Central Arabia and Syria to the more fertile plains and hills of the west, where they sell their cattle, and grow corn, which they take back with them to the desert in the autumn. These tribes are robbers by nature and tradition. We had strict warning from the French authorities not to pitch camp except in the confines of a village, as bivouacs were extremely dangerous. We continually saw bands of well-armed ruffians crossing our path and camping by the wells. Once, when we stopped to water, we were surrounded by a crowd, who clambered on the footboard and started fingering everything loose on the car.

Felix, our mascot, mystified them, and I heard one man cry out that he was "Shaitan!" —meaning the devil. We did not stop to argue with them, but pushed on as soon as possible.

At dusk we came upon a most picturesque Arab town, the houses of which were mud-built in the shape of sugar-cones, and, as all the buildings were joined together, the whole village was actually under one large roof. On a little rise we found a camp, occupied by a Russian general of the old régime and his son, a boy of eighteen years. They were making a topographical survey of the country for the Syrian Government, and we yielded to their pressing invitation to stay with them.

An hour's run next day brought us to Hama, a city of 80,000 inhabitants. This was once the capital of a kingdom, the extent of which is not known to history, and which is referred to in the Book of Kings as Hamath and Amatha. Josephus speaks of the city as Amatha, and the early Christian authors refer to it as Emath. In A.D. 639 it was taken by the advancing Moslems, and in the time of the Crusades it was occupied by the Ismaaliens.

In 1157 it was destroyed by a fearful earthquake, and was again taken by the great Saladin in 1178. It is a beautifully clean city, built of mud brick, and has been much improved by the French. Its chief and unique features are several huge water-wheels, seventy to ninety feet in diameter, which are erected on the river. The force of the river drives the wheels round, and at the same time small buckets attached to the wheels are filled with water. The wheels raise the water to ancient aqueducts, which carry it all through the town and its skirting gardens. The huge wheels have axles of timber which run in ungreased wooden bearings, a method of mechanics that results in a terrific nerve-jarring noise which never ceases.

Five hours more brought us to Homs, the ancient Emisa, which is mentioned by Pliny as Hemisa. It was here that the Emperor Aurelian defeated the Palmyrenes in A.D. 272, and it was also captured in 1099 by the Crusaders, who took it from the Arabs. Unlike Hama, it is built of basalt entirely. Its streets are as well paved as home cities, and its old fortifications are still in excellent condition.

We ran in sight of the Mountains of Lebanon through Nebk, into the fertile plain of Damascus, the City of the Seven Rivers, and the reputed paradise of the ancient Moslems.

Damascus is a beautiful city, and modernisation has not spoiled its ancient charm. Electric trams run in its streets, in quaint contrast with the camel caravans from Mecca and Baghdad, which still come and go as of old. Ancient legends give Damascus as the place where Abel was murdered; the house of Ananias can be visited; and here is to be seen the tomb of the great conqueror, Saladin.

From Damascus we moved on to the city of Beyrouth, on the coast, the largest seaport in Syria. Its importance as a political and commercial centre, its harmonious mingling of antiquity and modernity, are overshadowed by the intense beauty of its surroundings.

To reach Beyrouth from Damascus we crossed two ranges of mountains—first, the Anti-Lebanon, a range of bare and cheerless rock; and, from thence, fifteen miles to the Mountains of Lebanon. We climbed the bare and rugged eastern side to a height of 5,000 feet, and, on breasting the top, we suddenly emerged upon the glorious valley

of Lebanon, the original land described in the Bible as flowing with milk and honey. It was a scene of indescribable beauty, unequalled on any part of our journey. Fifteen miles below, on the coast, lay the multi-coloured city of Beyrouth. Aleh, a town overlooking the valley, is the chief summer resort, full of fine, modern villas and many first-class hotels; and here, in the hot weather, nearly all Beyrouth lives in a cool atmosphere. In our tropical attire, we felt quite chilly.

We could see the famous cedars of Lebanon —or such few as remain, and are strictly preserved. From here, of course, King Solomon obtained timber for the building of his temple. To drag ourselves away from this perfect spot required a considerable effort.

On our way down we counted four hundred cars coming up to the hills, but, alas, only one car in that four hundred was British. In the city of Beyrouth there are over three thousand cars, and, sad to relate, less than a dozen are of British manufacture. Why cannot we, who produce the world's best cars, make an effort to compete in this

market, where foreign and inferior makes predominate? Yet, so far as I could see, we are not attempting to compete, and one native gentleman I met actually asked me if we made motor-cars in England, and was quite incredulous when I told him that British cars were without equal.

As we had to wait for a ship to arrive, on which we were hoping to find our lost film, we took advantage of a spare day to visit the famous ruins of Baalbek, which rank as the most wonderful existent. Baalbek is the ancient city of Heliopolis, and was founded by the sun-worshippers. The fact that these people are known to history as Baalbiki proves Baalbek to have been a centre for the worshippers of Baal. Later, the Romans erected temples there to Venus, Jupiter, and Bacchus, and, after several centuries, the city was taken by the Moslems and destroyed.

Rebuilt in the seventh century, it was destroyed again in the twelfth century by an earthquake, which, however, could not rob it of all its beauty and glory. The buildings of the Roman temples are surely one of the seven wonders of the world, and

how the great corner-stones, which weigh 250 tons, were raised 150 feet without mechanical aid, defies imagination.

We visited the quarries near by, where the stone was hewn for the building of Baalbek, and here can be seen a cut stone, oblong in shape, which weighs over 1,000 tons, which had actually been moved bodily towards the temples, when presumably its progress was stopped by the destruction of the city. The few hours we spent there made us wish for a long opportunity to reflect, and to reconstruct in our minds the former splendour of Baalbek, and to form theories of the methods by which those wonderful engineers of the ancients ever raised such an edifice.

We returned to Damascus to prepare Felix for one of his supreme tests—the crossing of nearly 600 miles of waterless desert to Baghdad, over a waste on which there is neither a tree nor a blade of grass, and where breakdown or failure meant something unthinkably serious.

Already two transport companies, using large, high-powered, and speedy American cars, had found it practicable to cross the

desert, but many of our friends here cast doubt as to our ability to do it in our small vehicle.

The mail cars used in the desert condense all the steam from their radiators with a special condensing aparatus carried in the frame. This renders them independent of a water-supply for the engine.

With us it was different. The sun temperature in the middle of the day must have been somewhere around 175 degrees, if not more, and that alone is bad enough, even with a head wind. My greatest fear was of the hot following wind, which, if strong, would cause any car radiator to boil and waste water, and the first and only wells we could reach were at Rutba, 252 miles away. This does not sound much; but if you were at York, and you knew that the next water obtainable was at Brighton, I venture to suggest that it is a fact that would worry most people.

I engaged a good guide—one Sulieman, a high-caste Arab, who was reputed to know every heap of sand in the Syrian Desert—and when we stopped for our clearance paper at the French Customs House, the

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Chief Customs Officer congratulated us on obtaining such an excellent fellow. We carried thirty-six gallons of petrol, four gallons of oil, twelve gallons of water, and "iron rations" for a week. These special necessaries weighed 450 lbs., apart from our usual load.

At 2 p.m. on our fourth day we left Damascus, and retraced our steps for fifteen miles along the Aleppo road, through the luxuriant fruit-gardens and waving olive-groves, and then turned north-east to the open desert. The breeze, the direction of which had not been noticeable up to the present, began to blow behind us, but for thirty miles I had no difficulty in moving faster than the wind.

After going for an hour and a half, the wind increased in velocity, and, as luck would have it, the sand started to move. In a few minutes we were right in the thick of a severe sandstorm. I tried to run past it, but some soft "going" reduced me to second gear, and in another ten minutes the day was nearly as dark as London is in the thick of a November fog, although the sun was still high in the heavens.

In spite of protective glasses, we were soon semi-blind, and our eyes, ears, and nostrils were filled with sand. Several times I tried to get through the storm, but without avail, and the strength of this following wind may be imagined by the fact that, although my speedometer showed that I was moving at twenty-three m.p.h., my flag, on the radiator, was blowing directly away from me. Forty-three miles out, after watering the radiator once, I gave it up and stopped.

Sulieman, the guide, squatted down, and, wrapping his flowing robe round him, put his head between his knees and remained motionless, sheltering from that awful blast of hot wind and sand, every grain of which stung and burnt.

For an hour we waited thus, and the storm abated a little, but even then visibility was limited to a range of 300 yards. After filling up, I was horrified to find that we had used three gallons of water in our efforts to pass through the storm, or nearly a quarter of our total supply, and that with only a fourteenth part of our journey covered. I then decided to remain where we were

until sunset, when the wind would probably drop, so we settled down to a meal of tinned food.

Sulieman then gave us a good demonstration of the resource of the desert Arab. He wandered about for a few minutes, collected about a dozen small pieces of camel dung, and put them into a small hole that he dug with a sharp stone. Sheltering the hole on the windward side with his robe, he worked with flint and steel. In thirty seconds he had a blaze going, and in five minutes he boiled water and gave me a most delicious cup of coffee, the like of which can only be associated with this part of the East. It was a demonstration of what can be done with apparently nothing, in the desert.

Just then Wroe started to shiver, and, on taking his temperature, I found it to be 102.4 degrees. This was a problem. To turn round and make for Damascus would have taken many hours, because it would have been impossible to drive for more than a few minutes at a time in the face of the wind, so I decided to push on to Baghdad. I gave the sick man a strong dose of quinine and aspirin, wrapped him up well, and,

making him as comfortable in the back of the car as the heavy load and cramped conditions would permit, we waited for the wind to drop.

It dropped gradually, and at 8.30 p.m. it turned into a gentle following breeze, and I moved on. The caravan track was barely perceptible. After an hour I lost it completely. We circled round and round in widening circles. After half an hour, to our delight, we found the track again, and moved on steadily.

This had been a very tiring day. Only with the greatest difficulty, and by singing at the top of my voice all the songs I ever knew, could I keep awake. About midnight I saw a light ahead, and, making for it, I found, to my intense surprise, a big car, and an English lady and gentleman camping beside it. They were a Mr. and Mrs. James, of Baghdad, who had taken advantage of short leave to go to the valley of Lebanon for a change from the burning sun of Mesopotamia.

Mrs. James was the first lady to cross the Syrian Desert in an independent car, and, as the French authorities will not generally

allow individual cars to attempt the journey, Mr. James had moved away from Damascus as quietly as possible. We had a long chat, and, moving about a hundred yards on, we camped near them.

I am convinced that the secret of Britain's success as a pioneer nation is due in no small degree to her women, who, unlike those of any other nation, are content to share the discomforts and hardships with their men in little-known countries of the world without complaint, and even with enthusiasm. Here, in this instance, was a lady who, ten days before, had crossed this waste with her husband to get a week's rest and change, and was returning under conditions that were trying beyond description to strong, well-seasoned men. Their outfit consisted of two sleeping-bags and a stock of tinned goods. On a trip like this, where your whole body is a brown mask from dust and sand, and where to use water to wash is criminal, it is a hard life for a woman.

I doff my hat to Mrs. James and her like—women who accept such a life smiling, and without complaint.

. . . . . .

Wroe by this time was in a bad state, and nearly all the equipment went in making him comfortable for the night, but luckily he went off to sleep.

I lay in my sleeping-bag on Mother Earth and dozed off until 3 a.m., but awoke again, and, finding further sleep impossible, I laid awake and enjoyed the indescribable glories of a desert sunrise. I am sure if an artist had attempted to reproduce this morning sky, in colour, people would say he was colour-blind. It is impossible to realise the vastness of these desert spaces until you have lived to watch the sun rise and drop over what seems to be a sea of sand. As I watched it rise on this morning, in a vast space in which nothing stands out in relief, I felt almost inclined to forgive the sect of ignorant and misguided people who insist that the world is flat.

Early in the day, when we were under way, a crowd of gazelles crossed our path, galloping steadily to some remote watering-place, stopping for a few seconds to gaze at the strange animal that was disturbing their peace. A little later, four distinct clouds of dust appeared on the horizon. These gradually took shape, and the four huge cars of

the transport company of Nairn Bros., who run an overland desert mail, approached us at great speed. They stopped for a few minutes, but, as they have a scheduled time-table to keep, they could not delay. They were followed shortly after by the other convoy of the Eastern Transport Company.

This firm have lately discovered the ancient caravan track from Damascus to Baghdad, via the ruins of Palmyra, along which Zenobia, the Queen of the Desert, led her armies against the Persians and Romans. The E.T.C. run a mail service through to Teheran, the capital of Persia.

At 2 p.m. we arrived at Rutba, the only well *en route*, where a tribe of Arab nomads were camped, and in a minute we were surrounded by a filthy, howling mob of men, women, and children, all screaming for backsheesh. Our guide kept them off with no gentle hand, whilst we filled our tanks with filthy green water. I wished at the time that some of the over-romantic British and American flappers, who have been sheik-struck by seeing sublime misrepresentations of those characters on the films, could have been with us at this moment. They

would have had a quick disillusionment!

Romance could not be even associated with the real desert sheik, and, in a country where water is too precious to warrant a wash more than once a month, filth rather than romance predominates. The sheik at this place gave us the impression of not having been washed since birth, and I think he was still wearing the clothes of his childhood, into which numerous gussets had been sewn from time to time.

A month before our arrival the mail cars were attacked twenty miles from here, and the French sent out a punitive expedition, which captured all the raiders. A little later we passed the remains of a car which attempted to cross about two months earlier, and which was driven by Arabs from Baghdad. They ran out of water and had to stop, and, leaving a woman and child in the car, they tried to find water. One was never seen again, and the other was found some weeks later eaten by jackals. Luckily, a British mail aeroplane, which was passing overhead, spotted the stranded car. The flying men landed, left food and water with the parched and starving occupants, and wirelessed to

Baghdad, from whence an aeroplane was sent to the rescue.

A little further on we passed a dead hyena, surrounded by a flock of vultures—an object lesson of the dangers of getting stranded in the desert. We stopped that night at 11 p.m., having made a record journey of 261 miles in the day. Two hours' running the next morning, on a steady descent, brought us in sight of the date-palms bordering the River Euphrates, and at 1 p.m. we arrived at Feluja, where we crossed the river on the bridge of boats on our last thirty-six miles to Baghdad.

Half way we passed Khan Nuktah, a desert fort, where the notable Political Officer, Lieut.-Col. Leachman, was brutally murdered in the 1920 rising. Across the ancient and now dry canals of a bygone period of this country's greatness, passing many camps of Bedouins, we soon sighted the golden domes of Kad-i-main, the shrine of the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed. Ten minutes later the domes and minarets of Baghdad appeared on the horizon, and we passed through the fertile belt of agriculture that surrounds the city. Past the old Berlin-Baghdad railway

terminus, and the monument to General Maude, the conqueror of Baghdad, we crossed the new pontoon bridge, and arrived, four muddy, unwashed figures, at the Hotel Zia. The proprietor, Zia, an old war-time friend of mine, gave us a great welcome, and the joys of hot baths and iced lager beer were beyond description. We had covered the 548 miles of desert in twenty-four and a half running hours, without a puncture or mechanical trouble of any kind.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE CITY OF THE CALIPHS

THERE is a great contrast between the Baghdad of 1917 and that of to-day. In 1915 the Turks cut a wide street right through the city, to enable them to transport their heavy guns from the north to Kut-el-Amara. When I entered Baghdad with the occupying troops this was a " cut " in every sense of the word. The Turk had just taken a straight line, and cut through mosque, bazaar, and house in a relentless way. This street, now known as New Street, was then an unmetalled mud-heap. To-day the road is well metalled, the side-walks are paved with hard brick, and an efficient policeman is necessary at every cross-road to control the ever-increasing motor traffic.

Since our occupation, the ragged edges of the broken buildings have been replaced by fine new structures, and in many places fine brick and concrete edifices are adding dignity to the appearance of the city.

Originally the river was crossed by one bridge of boats at Baghdad North, which bent badly to any vehicle heavier than a bicycle. This has been replaced by a heavy pontoon bridge, and in the centre of the city is a new and wonderful bridge of decked and watertight lighters, which opens and shuts by steam power in three minutes, to allow river traffic to pass, and which is strong enough to bear half a dozen steam rollers.

Although I had been in Baghdad many times since the Armistice, this time I missed, more than ever before, something that cannot be replaced—" the great fellowship of the mud and the dust of wartime." In the old days you could number your friends and acquaintances by the hundred ; this time it was hard to find a familiar face. As a military camp, Baghdad has now ceased to exist, and whereas, in 1918, the ration strength of the armies in Mesopotamia was about half a million, order is now maintained by a small contingent of R.A.F. and armoured cars, which do not total a hundredth part of the old army of occupation.

I should like here to remove a fallacy which exists in the minds of most people at home,

and that is that Iraq is a sandy waste. On the contrary, it would be extremely hard to find sand anywhere. The whole country consists of rich alluvial desert, absolutely void of vegetation, but which only needs irrigating to make it yield two and three rich crops a year.

It was the granary of the world once, and supported a population as big, if not bigger, than that of the United Kingdom. In addition, it fed the south of Europe to a great extent.

We took Felix across the seventy miles of desert between the Tigris and the Euphrates to that wonderful piece of engineering, designed by Willcocks and executed by Jackson, "The Hindiyeh Barrage." This holds up the waters of the Euphrates, and rivals the great dam at Assouan for the huge area it irrigates. From it, one looks out on to a sea of growing corn, stretching as far as the eye can see, over what was, only a few years ago, barren desert.

As an engineering feat the Barrage is all the more remarkable because the country contains no stone, or any of the material necessary for a work of this kind, and it is built of bricks and mortar. The bricks had to

be made and baked on the spot in crude ovens, and by crude methods, and all the mortar had to be shipped from Europe.

The barrage was built, before the War, for the Turkish Government, but only came fully into operation under British rule. Now, every year, tens of thousands of acres of barren waste are being converted into green fields of corn, and with the prosperity that follows the cultivation of the land, has also come a period of peace and prosperity for the Arab such as he never dreamed of under the old Turkish régime.

We were extremely lucky with the weather in August here in Baghdad, and the thermometer did not pass 113 degrees in the shade during our whole stay; indeed, it was as low as 106 degrees on one day. Such mildness was almost without precedent, but it is a popular and quite feasible theory that the great increase of cultivation is responsible for the decrease in the temperature. In 1917, I remember when the thermometer in my tent rose to 135 degrees in the shade, and here, now, with electric fans everywhere and plenty of ice, it is hard to imagine how the poor old British soldier

existed and fought, without a single comfort, or anything more than a tent to protect him from the merciless sun.

From Hindiyeh we moved on to the ruins of Babylon, through a never-ending series of earth-mounds and embankments, which represented the remains of a wonderful system of irrigation canals that were in operation when Nebuchadnezzar and Hamurabi were Kings of Babylonia.

Babylon is said to have had an area that once exceeded the present area of London and Paris combined. For miles around are tens of thousands of huge earth-mounds, every one of which represents an ancient building, but which is now covered with the dust of centuries.

The part of Babylon which can be seen was excavated by the Germans shortly before the War, and is only a tiny part of the city. It includes, however, the famous Ishtar Gate, the Palace of Nebuchadnezzar, the sacred way of the priests, and the famous hanging gardens. In spite of the great heat, interest was intense, and left no doubt in the mind as to the wonderful state of civilisation that must have existed here

3,000 years ago, when Babylonia was a plain, covered with forests and rich cultivation.

Unfortunately, before the excavations were seriously tackled, a great deal of the interest was ruined by the Arabs, who, rather than bake fresh bricks, dug in the mounds and obtained the material from which the whole of the present-day cities of Kerbela and Hillah are built. Such desecration is now forbidden, and the future may yet yield up further unspoiled wonders of the great and mysterious past.

On another day we left Baghdad at dawn, and drove south to the ruins of Ctesiphon, the summer palace of the Parthian Kings. The great Arch of Chrosoes, over 170 feet high, with a span of 110 feet, was built of brick, and without a wooden moulding. It is regarded by engineers as one of the seven wonders of the world. It was one of the great centres that rose on the Tigris after the fall of Babylon, and dates beyond the year 100 B.C.

It was here that the diminished forces of General Townshend made their last stand before retiring on Kut-el-Amara. Now, nine and a half years later, the debris of the

battle is still to be seen, where that tired and disease-ridden little division, after losing half its strength, beat off a fresh force of 60,000 Turks, who strove in vain to break them.

In Baghdad can still be traced a few relics of the days of Haroun-al-Kaschid, who was Caliph at the zenith of its prosperity, but the Arab makes little effort to preserve them.

The Palace of the Great Haroun is now part of the bázaar, and, to the east and south, some of the fortified gates and battlements can still be seen. The greatest interest, however, is the bazaar, where Arab and Kurd, Briton and Parsee, Afghan and Mongol, American and Pathan, all rub shoulders, and do business under conditions that have not changed since the time of Christ.

The water-seller carries his goatskin and rattles his brass cups to attract the attention of the thirsty. The barber walks round with a small piece of carpet and a satchel of instruments, and, when he finds a customer, they both squat against the nearest wall, while he shaves or cuts the hair of his client. The wood-turner sits and works on a crude lathe, using his toes to propel it. The money-changer sits in a hole in the wall with

bowls of coins, which he rattles as he calls his prices. It is the true East, and at the bazaar gates of Baghdad the advance of civilisation has had a check.

In Baghdad my old Arab servant Hussein joined me, and many sport-loving readers may remember him as the Arab boxer, who, in 1919, gave many of our good light-weights a rough time at the National Sporting Club.

During our stay the feast of Murharrem was in progress, a feast of mourning kept only by the Shiah Mohammedans, in memory of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet, who was murdered. Following the assassination of Major Imbrie, the American Consul in Teheran, we were forbidden to visit the sacred cities and shrines during this period of fanaticism. We well realised the trouble the police chiefs have to protect foolish Christians who will not take advice, so we respected their instructions, much as we wished to obtain interesting film. At a time like this, even a casual observation of one of the minor processions made us feel that it only needed a spark to set the whole crowd ablaze.

In this procession an effigy of Hussein's

headless body is carried on a bier, followed by three groups of mourners. The first group chant and beat their breasts in rhythm to crude music, the second beat their backs with a " cat " made of chains, and the third group, consisting of white-robed men and boys, carry swords, with which they cut their heads until they are a mass of blood, and fall out unconscious, often to die from over-zealousness. It is surely a strange creed, and certainly an inconvenient one to follow.

This chapter cannot terminate without a word about the Air Force, who keep this vast country in order with a mere handful of men. The whole place is regularly patrolled, troops are transported in huge machines wherever they are needed, and perfect order is maintained at less than one-tenth of the money spent in 1921. As a matter of fact, the squadrons cost little more to maintain here than they would on home service.

Our gratitude is due to the A.O.C., Air Vice-Marshal Higgins, and all his staff, who went out of their way to help us, and who made it possible for us to obtain a most interesting cinema record of the great work of this new Service.

CHAPTER XII

INTO BEAUTIFUL PERSIA

WHEN the time came for us to leave Baghdad we had no feeling of regret, and the thought of the cool and bracing climate that prevails in the mountains and plateaux of Persia tempted us.

On the morning of our departure the thermometer stood at 110 degrees in the shade at 7.30 a.m., and we left the city in the face of the shimal, or date-ripening wind. It was like the blast from a furnace door, and covered us with a fine cake of dust, until our faces were like masks and our skin and lips cracked and sore. But what a run we had! Try for a minute to imagine a road absolutely flat, and as wide and long as the eye can carry. Such was the going on the desert between Baghdad and the town Bakuba, on the Diala river. There was not a bump or snag of any kind, and our speed was limited only by the amount of respect I had for our engine. It is a very thrilling sensation going "all out" over hard, alluvial

desert, and you get the peculiar feeling that you will presently come to the edge and go over it.

There was a particularly fine mirage on the day of our journey, and, as we approached the palm-groves that fringe the river, the distortion was extraordinary. The groves appeared as beautiful islands in a smooth blue sea, which kept receding as we approached it.

Felix purred that thirty-two miles in less than an hour, and, in spite of the high temperature, we arrived at Bakuba with a cool radiator. From thence the desert was more difficult; sand patches were frequent, and we struck, on many occasions, a curious hindrance to progress. Holes full of loose, fine dust, of the consistency of down, having the appearance of solid ground, were encountered. These were quite undistinguishable, and were discovered only when we dropped into them.

At noon we arrived at Sharaban, which is memorable for the tragedy that occurred during the Arab rising in 1920. After a short seige, Captain Buchanan, the District Irrigation Officer, was cut to pieces in the presence of his wife. The Political and Levy

Officers, Captains Bradfield and Wrigley, were also murdered. The Arabs took Mrs. Buchanan a prisoner, and, after a terrible experience, she was rescued by a British column five weeks later, more dead than alive. My wife and I passed through here only a few weeks before this tragic happening, on our way to Persia, and were lucky that we did not share the fate of our countrymen.

On approaching Sharaban from the south, the first building we reached was the Kaleh, where the murders took place. It was burned down by the rebels, but has since been rebuilt, and is now the Divisional Headquarters of the Iraq Police Levies. Here we lunched under the punkah of the local inspector.

Having been attached to the forces advancing over this country during the War, every ditch and mound had an interest for me, although the monotonous vision of the desert must have been very boring to my companions. Six miles from here we came to the Jebel Hamrin, the first hills or elevated land we had seen for nearly a thousand miles. They are very bare and uncharitable lumps of decomposed rock, which thousands of years ago must have been the coast-line of

the sea. A rough road passes over them for a distance of seven miles. Here the wind changed, and followed us, to our great discomfort, until, on the plain of Kizil Robat, we turned almost due east. Late in the afternoon we climbed a small hill, and came suddenly in view of the green date-groves of Khánikin, which were the last palms we saw on our journey.

Colonel Prescott, the Chief of Police in Iraq, had given us a letter to all police stations, and, on presenting it at Khanikin, we were guided along the river to the bungalow of the only Briton in the town. He was a Mr. McKim, engineer in charge of the pumping station at the new works of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company—a very lonely man, who was delighted to see us. His duty is to pump water to the new oil wells twenty-seven miles away. He also has a plant which turns out daily supplies of ice and soda-water, both of which are necessities to anyone compelled to make a home in such a country as this.

We were nearly 800 feet above sea-level, and although the day was trying, the night was cool enough to cause us to awaken, shivering,

at 4.45 a.m. We were now in view of the mountains of Persia, and to see the sun rise over them in the distance was a beautiful sight. Almost before the sun was up, we were on our way to the frontier, seven miles distant. Inspector Mirza Ali, of the police, had been warned of our coming, and accompanied us to the Persian Customs, a mile farther on.

The next twenty miles to Kasr-i-Shirin, lay along the most dangerous road we struck on the whole of our journey, and happenings of late have likened it to the north-west frontier of India. It is a no-man's-land, and is alternately swept by Arab, Persian, and Kurd, who, after raiding, fight each other for the spoils; and only the week previous to our passing there had been four attacks upon it. A fortnight earlier, a car, driven by an Arab, and conveying five passengers, had been held up by the most notorious of these bandits, a Kurd named Khan Fathi Beg. The driver, who was the only armed man, tried to make a fight of it, and, using his revolver, hit Khan Fathi Beg above the eyes, whereupon the rest of the band killed and mutilated the whole party of travellers.

If unopposed, these brigands do not kill, but strip the unfortunate traveller of all he possesses, including every shred of clothing, and leave him in the burning sun—which to a European, however, means certain death. Both the Iraq inspector and the commander of the Persian post insisted on escorting us through this troubled area. Though we were ready for trouble, and carried our revolvers on our knees, I made up my mind that speed might prove a better protection than arms.

For that twenty miles I owe Felix a sincere apology, and only on one other occasion did I drive him without regard to his composition or feelings, but he took it all in a manner which did credit to his breed. My companions were bumped up to the hood, and buffeted about until every bone in their bodies must have ached. A small party of horsemen appearing on a hill to the south only inspired me to greater speed, and it was with relief that we sighted the town of Kasr-i-Shirin, and eased up.

Here, at Kasr-i-Shirin, are the remains of a castle which, in the old days, was supplied with water by a fine aqueduct, and an

extremely interesting legend of romance attaches to its origin.

A beautiful princess lived in the castle, and had many wooers. None of them was fortunate enough to please her, and, rather than hurt their feelings with a refusal to marry, she made a habit of promising marriage conditionally on the performance of a task which she set them, and which she took good care was an impossible one.

One day a prince came along to seek her hand, and, as usual, she promised to marry him, naming as a condition that he should bring to the castle, within a period of three months, the sweet waters of the Pai Tak valley. As it happened, this prince had just had a slight difference of opinion with a neighbour, from which he emerged on the winning side with a matter of 40,000 prisoners. These he set to work, and, well within time, a magnificent aqueduct was completed. Thus he earned his reward, which the princess did not deny him.

At Kasr-i-Shirin we struck the fine military motor-road built by the British during the occupation, and which the Persians, to their credit, are keeping in good condition.

On we went, climbing continually, through ever-improving scenery and much cultivation, through the great gorge of Serapul, and fertile, well-watered valleys, to the village of Pai Tak. This was a huge base camp during the war, but now nearly all traces of it have disappeared. We climbed the famous Pai Tak pass over oak-covered mountains, past the commemorative arch built by Alexander the Great on his march to India, till we reached a level of 5,000 feet. We made camp on the top, and shivered as we bathed in cool spring-water in a temperature that was in great and welcome contrast with that of the previous afternoon.

After bathing, we noticed a great cloud of smoke away to the westward, which soon resolved itself into a huge forest fire. We contemplated moving to a safer place, but it was apparent, after careful observation, that the fire was not coming in our directon. It was a very fine sight when night fell, and we tried to photograph it, but without success.

It was at this stage that Hussein proved himself very useful, and warranted us carrying the extra weight he imposed upon us. He speaks all the various dialects we encountered,

and it was a great relief to be able to divide the night-watch up into four instead of three shifts.

Next day we were in a wonderful country, driving through wooded valleys, over short passes overlooking great fertile plateaux, covered with luxuriant vegetation. Many camps of nomad Kurds and Persians could be seen. These come from their rocky homes to this part of the country in the spring and summer to grow their crops and graze their flocks.

We arrived at the city of Kermanshah before sunset, in time to meet the sad procession of cars bringing the body of Major Imbrie (the murdered American Consul) to the railhead at Khanikin, *en route* for America. The cortége was accompanied by a number of senior Persian officers, and the whole garrison of the city turned out to pay tribute to the remains.

Kermanshah, known as the City of Seven Gates, on the River Kerkhah, is a flourishing town of 30,000 inhabitants, and is the centre of the converging trade routes from Baghdad, Teheran, and Ispahan. Near by is Tak-i-Bustan, noted for some wonderful rock-carvings made

by the Emperor Darius, to commemorate some of his victories; here is also the reputed tomb of Chrosœs.

These carvings date from about A.D. 100, and are in a remarkable state of preservation, being spoiled only by European and Asiatic vandals, who, for centuries, have carved their names over this wonderful work of art. It was disgusting to see that a famous British explorer had so far forgotten himself as to add his name to this work of desecration.

Twenty-seven miles further, at Bisitum, on the face of a mountain that rises 4,000 feet sheer above the plateau, are more carvings by Darius, representing prisoners of war being brought to him in chains. At Bisitum about 5,000 pilgrims encamped. We learned that a miracle was reputed to have happened about a month earlier, in which either a blind man saw or a lame man walked, but no one seemed sure about the facts.

Later, however, we were informed that the miracle was a myth, and an enlightened Mussulman at Kermanshah told me the true story. In the city the price of wheat and barley dropped very low. The landowners in Bisitum, who had big crops, could not afford

to pay freightage to the market and make a profit, so they decided to spread the report of a miracle. The rumour spread successfully, and the halt, the lame, and the blind peasants flocked here in thousands, with the result that the local price of grain trebled itself, and the landowners waxed fat on their blasphemy.

In England, most people imagine Persia to be a barren desert. Such an idea is fallacious. It was a glorious country that we were now traversing, with green mountains, clear streams, and fertile plains stretching as far as the eye could see. When Persia throws off the cloak of prejudice to Western ideas, and puts her house in order, the possibilities of the land are limitless. Minerals abound, cattle flourish, and anything will grow here in a climate which is second to none. It is, therefore, the more sad to have to relate that the Persians, as a people, are going backward, and not forward. It is extremely hard to believe that they were a great and civilised race when our ancestors were running about in coats of blue paint.

Almost everyone in Persia is corrupt, from the meanest domestic servant to the highest in the land, and the Americans, who have taken

charge of Persia's finance in an advisory capacity, have a rough time ahead. Nearly everyone in State employ, in an administrative position, races to make as much out of it, by bribery, as possible. For instance, if the Shah wishes to confer a financial favour on anyone he will make him the governor of a province, and, if the favoured one is lucky enough to remain in office for a year, he can retire with a considerable fortune.

During that time he can make money in a thousand ways, and, as an instance, I can quote the case of a man who was sentenced to death on Friday, and freed on the following Monday. His relatives paid a sum of money to the Governor, and the offence was forgotten. Had they paid up a little sooner, the man could probably have been spared even the unpleasant formality of being sentenced.

As an intriguer, the Persian is without equal, and it was only after residing in Persia for several years that I learnt enough of the national methods to enable me to understand them. The Persian mind works in a way entirely different from ours.

When, shortly after the war, I was administering the domain of a Persian nobleman of

royal blood, one of my duties was to deal with all petty crime and all civil cases of dispute. At my court one day, in the middle of a very trying and complicated case, I was disturbed by the wailing of the wife of one of my servants, who burst in on me with a sorrowful tale. It appeared that, in her absence, a negress resident in the village walked into the complainant's house and had helped herself to various things. The complainant returned and caught the negress, and, in the fight that ensued, the white woman suffered a badly bitten finger, and it was of this injury that she came to complain.

I did not want to be disturbed, so I sent a message to her husband telling him to deal with the matter himself. I forgot about the case for a few days, and, suddenly remembering it, I asked Hussein, my servant, if the husband, Yadullah, had dealt with the woman. I was informed that Yadullah had married the negress! Hussein did not share my astonishment. "Oh, don't you understand, sahib?" he said. "If Yadullah give her good hiding, and she not his wife, he get into plenty trouble. So he marry her to-day,

and she very pleased to get white man for husband. He pinch all her things now, and to-morrow he give her a good hiding, then he divorce her."

Divorce in Persia, I should add, merely consists of telling a wife to go. Here was surely a quaint method of revenge, but one which obtained for the husband the admiration of the whole village.

To resume the journey. We arrived at night at the foot of the Asadabad Pass, which crosses the Alvand range at a height of 9,000 odd feet, and camped, in a gale of wind, near the village. Several Persian gentlemen called on us, including the Chief of the Revenue Department of that district, who was an old friend of mine. He was very perturbed at the thought of our sleeping out without a guard, and insisted on sending us a gendarme to watch over us. That worthy went to sleep immediately on arrival, and snored hard until sunrise, confident that the moral effect of his presence would keep the local sneak-thieves away. He waited for a tip, and departed after an unsuccessful attempt to convince us that, but for him, we should have been murdered in our beds.

CHAPTER XIII

TOWARDS TEHERAN

We had a long climb over the Asadabad Pass, and, although for seven miles the average gradient is one in six, and in many places one in four, Felix purred up without a murmur. The view from the top was worth the effort, and the clearness of the atmosphere was such that we could see, with ease, a distance of sixty miles over the plain, where the caravan track curled away like a piece of white cotton over the horizon.

Two hours from the top brought us to the wooded slopes of Mount Alvand, which rises to 14,000 feet, and at the bottom of which is situated the city of Hamadan. As we approached the city, it was hard to believe that we were not in a Surrey lane, with English hedges on either side of us. Here we passed through beautiful orchards heavy with every kind of fruit. Peaches cost 2½*d.* for a basket of 8 lbs., and grapes and pears were still cheaper.

Having lived in Hamadan for some years, I had the sensation of home-coming. On

arrival we were welcomed by my old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Welldon, of the Oriental Carpet Company, and to sit down once more with them to a comfortable meal, in a real English house, was a great treat.

The climate here is perfect, and can be likened to that of Switzerland—never too hot in summer, and cold enough for winter sports from December to March. Hamadan has several historical associations. It is the ancient Eckbatana, and the remains of the seven-walled Palace of Xerxes are still to be seen. It also contains the tomb of the prophetess Esther, and was once the summer headquarters of Alexander the Great.

The morning after arrival we went down to the city to film and to photograph. I was just getting a snap at the village bakery when a lieutenant of police came up and requested us to accompany him to their headquarters. We were introduced to a very fat and pompous captain, who told me that we must not take photographs without permission of the Governor of the city. We had a long pow-wow, and I diplomatically agreed with everything he said, smiled at his frowns, and finally convinced him that we

were extremely important people. He then sent a message to the Governor, and, half an hour later, we received an answer to the effect that we might photograph anything we wished, with the exception of the mosques and holy places. Moreover, the Governor ordered that an officer of the police and a soldier should accompany us, and under this escort we were obliged to work.

Major Imbrie's murder had made the authorities very nervous of a recurrence, and the sight of a camera thoroughly upset them. Incidentally, the full story of the murder of Major Imbrie was given to me by a British resident, and was confirmed by Mr. Seymour, who was with Imbrie, and was injured.

There is, in Persia, a new religious sect called Bahais, the followers of a saintly man called Abdul Bahar, who has an ever-increasing following, of which the Mallahs, or priests of Islam, are in great fear. The new creed is a simple one, and consists of an acknowledgment that believers of every sect, whether Christian, Mussulman, Hindoo, Brahmin, are seeking the one Almighty God along different paths. Bahaism, as the new religion is called, seeks to join all these creeds in

brotherly love, avoiding interference with the various modes of worship, and aims at making all religions a means of world-unity rather than world-strife. The Bahais have shaken the power of the Mallahs badly in Persia, and the cult has an increasing following in U.S.A.

The fact that a few Americans are known to be Bahais, has had the effect of making the Americans, as a race, very unpopular with the Moslem priests. A few weeks before the murder, Riza Khan, the Prime Minister of Persia, added to the troubles of the Moslem priesthood by extending his sympathy to the Republican movement in the country.

The priests threatened to withdraw their support unless he immediately dissociated himself from any change of régime. As a sop to their damaged feelings, he issued an order forbidding the police or troops to interfere in the event of any attacks on Bahais by Mohammedans.

In order to take early advantage of this concession, the priests spread the report that, while drinking at a public fountain, a Bahai was struck blind following his refusal to give a donation to a Mohammedan charity. This supposed miracle attracted thousands of pilgrims daily to the fountain,

and Major Imbrie and Mr. Seymour visited the place to take photographs of the incidents there, but were asked to leave. They called a carriage, and, as they left, two or three women in the dense crowd fainted.

A Saed, or direct descendant of the Prophet, called to the crowd that the photographers were Bahais, and had poisoned the water. A man on a motor-bicycle chased Major Imbrie's carriage, and stopped the horses outside the Cossack Barracks in the main square, thus enabling the crowd to catch them up. The police not only refrained from interference, but joined in the attack. Mr. Seymour was actually dragged to the military parade ground, felled by a soldier with the butt of a rifle, and the mob outside in the open street set upon and nearly killed Major Imbrie, although he fought hard to defend himself.

Some officers, who realised who the victims were, rescued them, and they were taken to the police hospital. An hour later, the crowd, encouraged by the Saed, broke into the hospital, and, digging up the tiles, battered poor Imbrie into an unrecognisable mass. Seymour was lying in an adjoining room, unconscious, with his face covered,

and this fact saved him, for, seeing the face-covering, the fanatics presumed he was dead.

It is gratifying to relate that Riza Khan, the Prime Minister, took the strongest action against the murderers, irrespective of the religious standing of anyone concerned, and several people, including the Saed, were executed.

In Hamadan, Redknap had the bad luck to go down with a second dose of malaria, and this delayed us for several days, but he made a quick recovery, and we were soon on the road again, making for Kasvin. We left in perfect weather, but, within an hour of leaving, thunder-clouds began to gather all around us. We made a big effort to race them, and to get across the Aveh Mountains before the storm broke, but they beat us, and soon we were in the thick of a terrific tropical cloudburst. Luckily, we were on a hard metal road, but the rain was so heavy that we had to stop. I have never, even during an African tornado, seen anything like that rain, and I think anyone would have drowned had they attempted to walk half a mile in it.

We struggled along to the foot of the pass and put up for the night in the filthy wreck of a building that was once a British military hospital.

About three years earlier, during the British occupation, my wife and I were once snowed up in the same building for five days, but then we were entertained by the medical officer, and afforded almost home comforts. It was pathetic to see the place in such a state now—the window-glass gone, many of the window-frames wrenched out, and the whole place thick with filth. We had the best remaining room cleaned up, and settled down for the night. Soon after we turned in, a loud crash awakened us, and we found that a large piece of the roof, which had been loosened by the storm, had fallen on Redknap's bed, but, luckily, had missed him. This rather spoiled our sleep, so we moved our beds under the shelter of the wall and watched the roof all night.

We crossed the Aveh Mountains early next morning, and rested for a meal at Ab-i-Garm. Ab-i-Garm means "hot water," and the place takes its name from the fact that it is full of hot mineral springs. Having postponed our morning ablutions until now, we had a fine natural hot bath in a hole in the rock, into which the water was bubbling.

For the last six days we had been at an

altitude of over 6,500 feet, and now, on the Kasvin plateau, we were 2,000 feet lower. Here the harvest was in full swing on a vast plain, brown with ripe wheat and barley, and the crude Persian methods of dealing with the grain gave us good scope for photography.

The thresher is a particularly crude affair, consisting of what looks like six small, rimless cart-wheels, fitted to a four-foot axle, and drawn by a pair of bullocks. One man takes the corn and spreads it in a circle at the foot of the stack. The thresher is driven round and round, in circles, over the straw and ears of corn, which are broken up. At the same time the grain is separated from the ears.

The method of separating the grain from the straw is also interesting. On the first windy day the labourers take large wooden spades, and throw the broken straw and grain high into the air. The straw, being light, blows away from the heap, and the corn falls to the ground, where the women sift it to remove earth and stones. A good threshing-machine would accomplish in two days the same amount that it takes these primitive people, and still more primitive machines, two months to accomplish.

A few hours more brought us to Kasvin, where we stopped for only a few minutes. This city was the chief centre of the Russian sphere of influence before the War, and is to a great extent Russianised. The old Russian Consulate is a very fine building, and there is a substantial building that was once a Russian club. The main street is a good, wide thoroughfare called the Shah Boulevard, and is bounded at the west end by the ruins of a palace built by Abbas the Third, who is also credited with planting the huge trees that still line the boulevard.

The chief industry of Kasvin seems to be begging. We stopped to buy a few cigarettes, and foolishly passed the change to a blind girl. In a minute we were surrounded by a crowd consisting of the blind, the halt, and the lame, of every age and size. They clambered all over the car, and we only escaped by starting the car and scattering the filthy crowd, who chased us for a considerable distance.

During and after the War, I was in Kasvin with my unit, and, naturally, every building and street had an interest for me, though it was quite sad to miss the old familiar khaki.

At the Teheran gate I found that my old

billet was occupied by a motley throng of Russian refugees, and the N.C.O.'s and men's club, formerly a most comfortable house, had collapsed, and was in a state of utter ruin. I strolled along to the old sergeants' mess, almost expecting to see my old M.S.M., Burton, emerge, with his ever-smiling face and smart salute. He always strove to make their mess better than that of the officers, and I think it would have broken his heart to have seen a crowd of dirty Kurdish muleteers drinking tea in his bedroom.

We left at 2 p.m. on our final run of ninety miles to Teheran, the capital, on a straight road thick with personal memories—the place where my old charger was trained for the races in the capital, the place where my staff-sergeant shot a running hare with a Service rifle, also where we whiled away many an hour gazelle-hunting in the weary time following the Armistice — all tender memories of a happy time that will never recur. On and on we purred, on the last piece of real road we should encounter for the next 2,100 miles, through the ramparts and over the moat, into the fine, wide, tree-lined avenues of Teheran, the capital of the Persian Empire.

CHAPTER XIV

WE LOSE WROE

SEVEN miles north of Teheran lies the smallest of our British possessions—a tiny village called Gul-Hek. It is so small that it is not shown on any map. The history of its transference to Britain is very interesting. It seems that the famous Shah, Nasr-ed-Din, coveted a beautiful marquee which was the property of the British Minister in Persia. He expressed a desire to possess it, and the Minister sent it to him. The Shah was so delighted that he made the village of Gul-Hek an absolute gift to Britain, and in that village now lies the British Summer Legation.

The inhabitants of this square mile are British subjects, under the jurisdiction of the British Consul-General, and there is great competition among the Persians for business premises and residences in this square mile of Britain.

My old friend, Mr. Harris, manager of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, took me up there to live at his house, immediately on our arrival.

It lies 1,100 feet above Teheran, and is very cool in the summer, in marked contrast to the city. The Military Attaché at the British Legation gave me a note for the Military Governor, requesting him to allow us every facility for photography during our stay, but here the authorities were even more nervous of the sight of a camera than they were in Hamadan.

Permission was granted, but we were obliged to do all our work under a strong escort. The authorities insisted on our carrying an officer of the police and two sergeants of the army and gendarmerie, who were all armed to the teeth, and gave Felix a very warlike appearance. As before, we were absolutely forbidden to photograph any mosque or holy place. Otherwise we were afforded every facility, and were allowed to visit the Royal Palace, the museum of which contains the wonderful Peacock Throne, which was taken by the Persians in the sack of Delhi some centuries ago.

This museum contains a priceless collection of old carpets and rugs, but mixed with them are some trumpery pieces of bric-à-brac. Near the Peacock Throne which is studded

with precious stones reputed to be worth £7,000,000, can be seen a cheap alarm clock. On the wall is a painting by a world-famous artist, and underneath a tawdry piece of china of the "Present from Margate" variety. Nevertheless, there are some priceless treasures that are a joy to the eye. How corrupt Governments have been in office for years and years without looting such a treasure-house it is hard to imagine. The sight of the Peacock Throne stirred our own base instincts, and even Redknap remarked that he would love to be left there alone for half an hour with a hammer and chisel! We all agreed with him.

By the kindness of my late chief, H.E. Sardar Akram, we were received by the Crown Prince of Persia, who is hereditary Regent in the absence of the Shah. He is a very clever and cultured young man, and a far more popular figure than the Shah. The Prince took a lively interest in our journey, and a great delight in posing for the first time for the cinema camera. Rumour has it that his brother, the Shah, may be obliged to abdicate in his favour, and the general opinion of the

enlightened Persians is that such an arrangement would be a change for the better.

Teheran is a very beautiful city, and is situated at the foot of the Elburz Range, of which the highest peak—Mount Demavend, an extinct volcano—rises to a height of 19,000 feet, and its summit, permanently snow-clad, can be seen from most parts of the city. When the Shah Nasr-ed-Din visited Europe, he returned to Persia much enlightened, and did great work in remodelling Teheran on European lines. He cut wide streets through the crowded bazaars, and encouraged modern architecture, and to-day this little-known city of the East compares well with many in South Europe.

The present Prime Minister, Riza Khan, has followed his example to good effect, and the public works now in operation in Teheran are doing a great deal to improve this already handsome city.

In Teheran our bad luck started, and, as we were preparing to leave, Redknap fell sick, with a temperature of 103 degrees. His complaint was soon diagnosed as malaria fever. He was so bad that for several days I had grave doubts as to his ability to proceed.

His strong will and robust constitution, however, pulled him through, and in five days he had recovered sufficiently to enable us to plan our start in a couple of days.

The day before this contemplated move, Wroe went down with a far worse bump, and with a fever that did not respond to any treatment. We waited and waited, and hoped for the best, but, on the eighth day, it was proved to be a severe form of typhoid. Dr. Scott, the British resident doctor, ordered his immediate removal to the American hospital, so all chance of his being able to proceed was extinguished.

It was extremely lucky for Wroe that his illness seized him here, for south of Teheran our hardships were so great that his chances of recovery must have been small. It was hard luck for him not to be able to finish, but a severe abdominal operation earlier in life had weakened his constitution. This weakness developed, and rendered him entirely unsuitable for the rigours and hardships of such a trip as this.

Our route had been originally planned via Meshed, but the day before we moved we received the news that the Turcoman tribes

were in revolt, and in possession of the road, looting all caravans. Also we heard that we should have to cross rivers and streams where the flood-water was ten feet deep in many places. The only alternative route was by way of Ispahan, Shiraz, Kerman, and Bam, a route that included several hundred miles of salt desert. I welcomed it, however, as an opportunity of seeing South Persia for the first time, and the change of plan proved to be more than justified by subsequent events.

Five hours' run from Teheran brought us to Kermisheh, where the Indo-European Telegraph Company kindly placed their rest-house at our disposal. Here we were right in the salt desert. Every stream was of salt water, and even that from the deepest wells was very brackish. Used for tea, even with lots of sugar, the flavour of the water could not be disguised, and a very large tot of whisky was necessary to make it anything but nauseating.

An hour's run brought us to the shores of the great salt lake of Kum, which is very slowly drying up. As the lake came into view it presented a beautiful sight—a mass of silver, with the plain, which was once the bed of a

much larger lake, stretching for miles to a saucer-edge of great rocky mountains.

The extent of visibility was tremendous, and the caravan track, which was perfectly straight, could be seen for miles. Redknap estimated that we could see five miles of it, and I thought seven miles, but the speedometer showed us that we were both wrong, and the distance visible eventually proved to be eighteen miles. At that distance, small dots, which afterwards proved to be camel caravans, could be plainly seen with the naked eye, in the clear atmosphere, and the air was so crisp and cool at that hour of the morning that it was good to be alive.

After seventy more miles of salt plain we came within sight of the Holy City of Kum, one of the most sacred cities in Persia, and famous for the shrine of the sister of the ninth Imam. The inhabitants have the reputation of being extremely fanatical, and our hopes of photography were low, as we had been advised whilst in Teheran not to show a camera here.

We drove Felix into a cool caravanserai, and, sending the faithful Hussein for food, we settled down for a quiet smoke. Suddenly

a cheery-looking old gentleman in the distinctive dress of a Saed (or direct descendant of the Prophet), and followed by a large retinue, came up to us, and cordially shook hands. He had carpets spread for us, accepted an English cigarette, and chatted in a most friendly way. This was a great surprise to me, for any food, drink, or smoke from the hands of a Christian is supposed to be unclean to the Mussulman, and more in particular to a holy man such as our friend.

I told him the objects of our journey, and that we were making a film and photographic record of it. To my great surprise, he offered to take us round the city under his protection to enable us to make pictures of the shrine. This was an unexpected and unique opportunity, which we accepted with alacrity.

In company with the holy man, and followed by a large crowd, we focussed our camera on all we wished, and we certainly obtained some most interesting photographs. We had a privileged and interesting hour near the shrine, with its wonderful golden dome. We were fascinated by the minarets, which are covered with the most wonderful coloured tiling. Our host insisted on posing

for his photograph, and, pointing to the crowd, he told me that, had we not been under his protection, we could not have shown a camera.

We then returned to our caravanserai to feed on a real Persian meal of cabobs, flat bread, and water melon. Cabobs are a national dish, and are very good, providing you can avoid seeing them made. Redknap insisted on watching the process, and I give, in his own words the recipe for making them.

"Take a small dirty Persian boy and one piece of meat. Throw the meat at the boy, who *may* catch it. He shakes it thoroughly to remove most of the flies, and minces it with a piece of sharpened hoop iron, on any old piece of wood handy. The dust of a passing caravan adds greatly to its flavour, and gives it the true Oriental taste. When the mince has been thoroughly kneaded to the required colour, press it on to skewers and cook over a charcoal fire. Fan the fire vigorously, so that the flying ashes may add to its crispness. It is generally eaten wrapped up in native bread, and surrounded by a crowd of interested natives suffering from catarrh."

On we went again through never-ending salt desert, and stopped for the night at Dalijan, where a prominent Persian put a good house at our disposal. As we left the town in the morning, and passed through the South Gate, I was astounded to see an aëroplane lying there. It was an ancient relic of the Wilbur Wright period. A Frenchman had tried to fly it from Bushire to Teheran for the purpose of training Persian officers to fly, and he had landed here, in trouble, some weeks earlier.

That Frenchman must have been a super-optimist, or else very tired of life, and any Persian officer who could be tempted to trust himself to that bunch of mechanical antiquity must have been a very simple and confiding child.

Two more days of desert and we emerged on the fertile plain of Ispahan, where the domes and minarets of the ancient capital of the Shahs shone brightly in the face of the setting sun. An hour later we were enjoying hot baths in the British Consulate, as guests of Mr. Bristowe, the Consul-General. Ispahan is beautifully situated on a plateau at a height of 6,000 feet, and has a perfect climate. It is a lasting monument to Shah

Abbas III, who is responsible for most of the fine buildings in the city.

It was here that the game of polo originated, and in the huge *maidan* (square), which is nearly 700 yards long, the old original stone goal-posts are still to be seen. In the sixteenth century, polo was played over the whole area of the *maidan* by sixty players a side.

We were introduced to H.H. Prince Mohammed Vali Mirza, the Chief of Staff to the Divisional G.O.C., who kindly arranged for our benefit a match between his officers. It took place on the original ground, and the Prince himself played. I was surprised to find what a good standard of play exists here, and how very excellent is the quality of the ponies. It was very disappointing when a severe dust-storm rose and spoiled a good game, but, nevertheless, it added to the picturesqueness of the surroundings. The surface of the square was very rough, and covered with loose stones, but it did not seem to upset either pony or man. To see such good horseflesh galloped on such a ground would have brought tears to the eyes of any crowd at Hurlingham.

Overlooking the *maidan* is an ancient

palace, known as the Arq, now in a state of decay, and which will probably collapse during the next snowfall. Such a happening will be a great shame, for the building is a fine specimen of Persian architecture, and is beautifully decorated with striking pictures by famous Persian artists of the Middle Ages.

The River Zenderud, which is 600 feet broad, is here crossed by three noble bridges, one of them being 1,000 feet long, and containing thirty-four arches. Ispahan was taken by Timur in 1387, when 70,000 of the inhabitants were said to have been massacred.

During the seventeenth century it reached the climax of its prosperity, and, under the Shah Abbas, became the capital of Persia. Its walls were then twenty-four miles in circuit, and it is said to have contained nearly 1,000,000 inhabitants. It was then the emporium of the Asiatic world, and Ambassadors from Europe and the East crowded to its court. In 1722 it was devastated by the Afghans, after which the seat of Government was transferred to Teheran. Now it contains a population of 100,000 only, but is gradually regaining its standing as the most important trading-centre of Persia.

We were loath to leave, and moved on over the great caravan route that runs from north to south of Persia, continually passing great caravans of camels, mules, and donkeys moving coastward, laden with rich merchandise and carpets, or bringing European products northward.

Many times Felix was the unwitting cause of stampeding these animals, few of which had ever seen a motor-car before. Hundreds and thousands of migrating nomads continually crossed our path, returning to their desert homes heavy-laden with grain to keep them during the long winter months.

I noticed for the next few days that, whenever we stopped for any time at a caravanserai or amongst the tribesmen, extraordinary deference was shown to me, so I asked Hussein what it all meant. He laughed and said, "That's all right, sahib. Yesterday when we stop I tell everyone that you are the richest sahib in England, and that you have come here to give them a railway. To-day I tell them that you are the head Consul Sahib in England, and come to see if all other Consuls do their work proper." It seemed a shame to disillusion them.

CHAPTER XV

FÊTED BY NOMADS

It was about a hundred miles north of Persepolis that we had an adventure which might have brought our expedition to a sudden end. We were approaching, and about five miles from, a range of hills intersected by a gorge. The plain was fairly smooth, and sloped up to the hills on our left, and down to a distant river-bed on our right. We were rolling along the track at about eight m.p.h. when, from the cover of trees on our left, we saw about a dozen armed horsemen approaching the track. They were about a hundred yards ahead of us, and, thinking they were tribesmen on the trek, I took little notice of them. Then I saw a similar group approaching from the opposite direction, and they galloped up to the road and barred our way.

I had a nasty feeling of funk, and a sensation of my heart slipping quickly into my boots. When held up by well-armed horsemen, it is not at all heroic to try and fight

an uneven battle. Only two courses are open. One is to say "*Bismillah*" ("Help yourselves"). The other is to run, if possible.

We decided on the latter course, and, as it was impossible to turn round, I "trod on the gas," and went at the intruders, wondering how it would affect the car if I hit a horse broadside on. We had to take that chance, and, as we approached them with quickly increasing speed, they split up, and I missed one fellow by a fraction of an inch. They turned and started after us, firing wildly as they came, but luckily did not hit us.

I have a faint recollection of looking over my shoulder and seeing one big fellow almost up to the car, which I worked up to thirty-five m.p.h., and, by the greatest piece of luck, we then came to a long patch of dust. I could not see what happened, but Redknap told me later that the screen of dust, which we put up, saved us. This dust-cloud must have blinded the horsemen, and they gave up the chase.

We did not stop until we were well in the gorge, where the track was narrow, for we felt that no sensible brigand would follow

us in a place where only two could ride abreast. We put a good ten miles between Felix and the brigands before we halted to wipe off the nervous perspiration, and to seek a little refreshment.

Felix had again helped us out of our troubles, and in that first short burst I am sure we took, at a speed of thirty m.p.h., obstacles which, in the ordinary way, we should have crawled over. We were more than relieved to find that the car was none the worse.

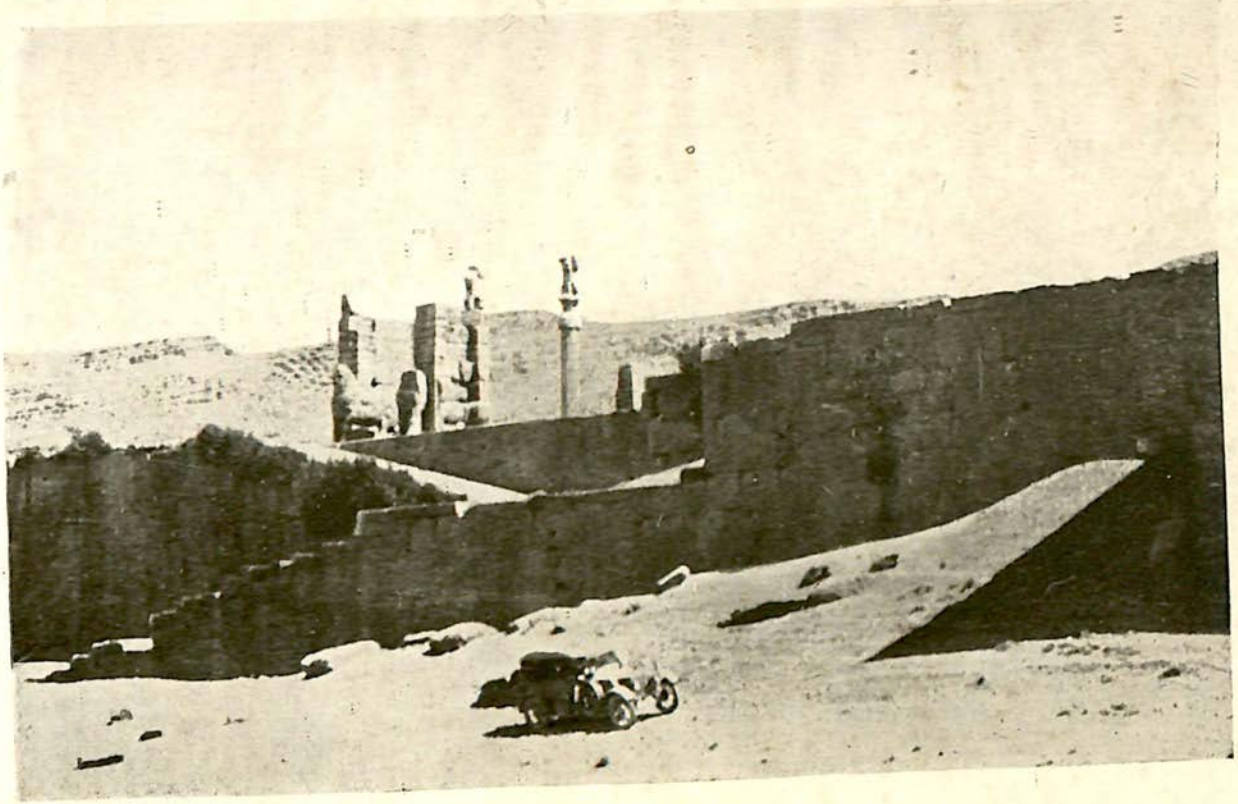
The next day, after a slow, dreary drag over a terrible track, we arrived on the Plain of Persepolis, the ruins of a city with which, according to the ancient writers, "no other city could be compared, either in beauty or wealth," and which was generally designated the "Glory of the East." Darius, Herstaspes, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, each in his turn contributed towards its aggrandisement. It was burnt during his advance of conquest by Alexander the Great, in a drunken orgy, at the instigation of Thaïs, the courtesan.

The ruins are among the finest in existence, and to see Persia in her present state of decay makes one marvel at the wonderful state of

civilisation that must have existed here in the early ages—a civilisation that rivalled Rome in its splendour.

The whole internal area of the city was built on three huge terraces about 1,800 feet long by 1,000 feet wide, rising about 80 feet above the plain, and reached by a huge, double flight of marble stairs. Each step was 22 feet wide, 3 inches high, and had a 15-inch tread, which enabled horsemen to ascend them. The entire city was built of dark grey marble, and many wonderful carvings are still to be found in a well-preserved state in the Palaces of Xerxes and Darius. The main portals are still standing, and bear figures of animals resembling the Assyrian bulls of Nineveh.

Above the ruins, and cut in solid rock, are the tombs of Jamschid and Xerxes. We climbed the hill and entered the tomb of the Jamschid. The actual coffin was looted years ago, but the sarcophagus still remains intact, with its broken lid of ten tons of solid granite. Wandering Persians use the tomb for shelter at night, and nothing but filth surrounds this wonderful mausoleum. In the Great Palace of Xerxes, with few of its forty pillars



"FELIX" AT THE GREAT STAIRWAY, PERSEPOLIS

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remaining, we found three Persians stabling their horses. As on other famous ruins, here, in Persia, vandals for many centuries have defaced the wonderful carvings by cutting their names across them.

As we left Persepolis our ruminations on this scene of former splendour were brought to a sudden end as, with a severe jerk, the rear wheel of Felix fell through the earth and rotten timbers of a small bridge. He was right in the water, and we had a dusty and tiring job for two solid hours getting him back to *terra firma*. As we swore and cursed our luck, and prepared for a further dusty journey, an angel appeared in the shape of a very dirty small boy with some melons. What melons they were! I am sure that the great Darius never enjoyed a meal as much as we enjoyed that cool fruit under the shadow of the pillar of Persepolis.

A long drag over the hot, dusty plains, and a long climb up a steep pass, suddenly exposed a glorious view—the city of Shiraz, studded with cypress-trees. We entered by the famous Koran Gate and were soon at the Consulate, where my old friend, Mr. Monnypenny, the Vice-Consul, made us very welcome.

With his help and co-operation we met the G.O.C. of the Persian Division stationed here, and this gentleman insisted on turning out the whole garrison for our benefit on the following morning. They made quite a decent show, and afforded us unusual scope for filming, and the general himself was as excited as a schoolgirl at the opportunity of posing for the camera.

We also made the acquaintance of His Highness the Kawam-ul-Molk, who is the supreme chief of the five great tribes of the Khamseh. These tribes, although of Arab origin, inhabit the southern plains of Persia. They were then migrating back to their winter homes, and by the kind invitation of the chief we set off the following day, in charge of his agent, to visit the Bahseia tribe.

This unique experience will live long in our memory. The Kawam is a power to whom even the Government of Persia must bow at times, for he can raise 20,000 horsemen, well armed and mounted, at forty-eight hours' notice. These men are not dependent on cumbersome transport when on the warpath, and a tribesman will move off with his rifle and ammunition, and two

pounds of flour tied into a corner of his robe. He will exist on this for three days, move seventy or eighty miles a day, and be ready to fight at any time of the day or night.

Next day, accompanied by the agent, we set off to visit the tribes, who, on the order of the Kawam, had stopped moving, and awaited our coming. About six miles from the camp we were met by two tribesmen, with horses for the whole party. We transferred the camera and all the baggage on to mules, and, leaving Felix, we rode off into the hills for an hour, when, turning a corner we suddenly came upon a party of two hundred horsemen.

The previous attempt to hold us up was still in our memory, and, when I first saw them, my inclination was to turn and run, but there was no need for nervousness, as they were a guard of honour sent out by the chief to meet us. The chief was a very handsome man, about fifty years of age, who was a veritable arsenal of arms and ammunition. He dismounted and greeted us, and insisted on my taking his own horse, and, surrounded by ever-increasing numbers of horsemen, we rode into the tribal camp, where the whole tribe turned out to greet us.

We were immediately conducted to the huge guest-tent, where, sitting on the floor on a wonderful spread of rugs, we were given tea in beautiful little silver cups.

We found that this was the first occasion that any European had been entertained by this tribe, and a great feast had been arranged in our honour. Almost as soon as we arrived strings of men arrived with countless dishes of food. A large white cloth was spread on the floor, and was covered with the flat bread of the country. In the centre of the floor was placed a huge dish of rice, surmounted by a lamb, roasted whole. Round it were laid roast chickens, boiled chickens, chickens in pomegranate sauce, and chickens cooked in a number of other wonderful ways; partridges, grouse, sweet pilaus, meat pilaus, huge bowls of cream curds and whey in a dozen forms; wonderful confections of almonds, dates, and figs, and every kind of fruit that the country produces. Knives and forks there were none.

The chief and ourselves squatted at one end of the spread, and, reminiscent of our own ancient custom, the minor chiefs took their places below the salt. Only the right

hand is used in feeding, and, putting his hand into the various dishes, the chief broke off the most tempting portions of the various meats and handed them to us. On these we set to work with a good will. I have been at many native feasts in Africa and the East, but this was the most attractive of all of them, and had we eaten a tenth part of all that was placed in front of us, I am sure we should have died of syncope.

Among the sweets were some transparent cakes of the most vivid colours—blues, greens, reds, purples—and Redknap partook very freely of them. He then enquired how they were coloured, and the chief told him that it was by means of the same dyes that were used to colour the wool for making carpets. He did not eat any more.

Tea finished the meal, after which a man came behind each one of us and poured perfumed hot water over our very greasy hands.

The camp was spread over a huge plain, and contained many hundreds of tents, which are all made of homespun and woven goats' hair. Although they are pitched in such a way that they are proof against any wind, the

tents are so light and so cunningly constructed that they can be struck in a minute. We spent the whole afternoon riding round the immense camp and studying all the conditions of this primitive existence, which many a jaded and worried city man would be glad to share.

The chief wealth and mainstay of the tribes are sheep and goats, both of which yield them nearly everything necessary for the means of subsistence. A man's wealth is gauged by the number of animals that he possesses. Every one of the animals yields more than its value in milk, butter, cheese, curds, and wool. Even the dung is mixed with mud and made into round cakes, which are dried in the sun and used as fuel in the winter. In this camp there were 40,000 sheep and goats, 2,400 camels, and 6,000 horses and oxen. We saw the sheep being shorn, the wool being combed with primitive instruments and spun into yarn. In other places it was being woven into cloth, or, after dyeing, made into beautiful rugs.

The women are the chief workers in camp, and when the flocks leave camp in the morning to graze in the hills they are guarded by

the children. It appears that the children start work almost as soon as they can walk. The men confine themselves to riding and shooting, and generally keeping themselves in a state of continual readiness for war. The old chief assured me that, if he gave the word, the whole camp could be struck, and everyone on the move, in an hour. As the sun fell, the sheep and cattle returned to camp in clouds of dust. Squatting around one of the fires which had been started, we lit our pipes and drank tea and arak (a native spirit of the date) with the chief and his relations.

It was a perfect, simple life, and as near to nature as it is possible to get, and as I reclined lazily by the camp-fire that night I found myself envying these people, who live a life far apart from the hurry, bustle, and heart-breaking competition of the present-day world, even though they do have to lie down to sleep with cocked rifles. Beds were soon laid for us, and, tired out, we slept the sleep that is only possible in the open air on a perfect, starlit night. I awoke once to see a strong guard posted round our tent, because the code of honour of the tribesmen compels

them to safeguard a guest, and for anything to happen to a visitor whilst accepting hospitality under their roof, would bring everlasting disgrace on the hosts.

A wonderful standard of physique is maintained by this sturdy crowd. Tuberculosis is almost unknown, and longevity is a distinct feature with them. The average height of the men cannot be short of six feet, and the women are also strong and magnificently built. Every man, woman, and child marches 700 miles, with all their possessions, every spring, to the fertile hills, and returns a similar distance in the autumn, which is a feat of endurance that is not undertaken in a lifetime by one in a million Europeans.

Our regret was that we could not stay with them for weeks. Next day we were escorted by the chief and all his lesser chiefs back to Felix. Many of the younger generation had never seen a car before, and there was almost a battle for preference when I offered to take them for a short ride, which they enjoyed with the simple enthusiasm of school-children riding an elephant in the London Zoo for the first time.

With our farewell to Shiraz, we entered upon

the most difficult and hazardous phase of our journey—1,300 odd miles across a country that is nearly all desert, and a great part of it salt desert. It is a place too barren to produce even an egg or a blade of grass, and fresh water is most scarce. We were to move through one of the loneliest parts of the world, and hereafter we sometimes went days without seeing traffic of any kind.

CHAPTER XVI

LAST AND WORST OBSTACLES

THE night before we left Shiraz we had a serious misfortune. Felix was left unattended for an hour or so, and in that time every bit of ammunition we possessed, with the exception of five rounds, was stolen. It was not possible to replace it here, and, as we should have to be dependent on our gun for meat for nearly all the remainder of the journey, it was a matter that caused us a deal of anxiety.

We set off from Shiraz through the rocky bed of a river which intersected a range of mountains, staying for an hour to photograph the tomb of Sadi, the great Persian poet. In this part of the world, and particularly in Persia, he is regarded even more highly than the great Omar Khayyám.

We lunched that day at one of the most curious villages I have ever seen. It was right on the route that is covered twice a year by the migrating tribesmen, and every house is a miniature fort in the shape of a

round tower with a small battlemented roof. There are only about seventy houses, but these are separate, and scattered over a very large area.

If the tribesmen are fractious, or out to loot, every villager shuts his cattle in on the ground floor and hies him with his gun to the roof. Were there one hundred men in one fort, the village would present a much easier problem to the attackers than it does with a force of one hundred men spread out in seventy small forts, each a minimum distance of 250 yards from the next. This method of defence is supposed to be very effective, and of late this village has been immune from attack.

The "going" here was very bad for our car, and ten hours of slow progress through a barren but beautiful country brought us to the shores of Lake Niriz, sixty miles long by ten miles wide, whose waters are so salt that they contain no life at all. Some tribesmen on the move were camped on the shores of the lake. We discovered a very shabby mud fort containing two much shabbier Persian soldiers, and near this place we camped for the night.

I shall never forget that night if I live to be a hundred. The altitude of this place was actually 1,000 feet lower than at Shiraz, and the temperature was so low that sleep was impossible. I was lying in a warm fleece bag with a blanket both under and over me, and during the night I kept adding to my clothes until I had on two pairs of pyjamas, two pairs of khaki trousers, two flannel shirts, and three pairs of socks! Yet all this clothing made no perceptible improvement in comfort.

Redknap was feeling the cold just as much as I was; so about 3 a.m. we made up the fire and sat huddled round it, wrapped in blankets, and watching the most glorious sunrise imaginable. The wonderful colouring, and the reflection of the mountains in the perfect, smooth water of the lake, made it a subject that Turner would doubtlessly have sold his soul for the opportunity of reproducing.

Next day we were in a country that was almost uninhabited, but which teemed with game. Moufflon and ibex abounded, and gazelle were moving about in thousands. My over-anxiety over the lost ammunition

made me so nervous that, in firing at a herd not 300 yards away, I missed with every one of our remaining five shots! The animals must have had private information that these were our last cartridges, because for the rest of the day they came in herds of twenty or thirty, and stopped in the road almost within revolver range of the car. I could almost hear them laughing at us.

Late in the afternoon we reached the village of Niriz, but pushed on and made our camp in the open country, where, I am glad to say, it was warmer than on the shore of the lake.

Next afternoon, at the foot of a pass, we met a few Persians, one of whom was covered with blood from head to foot. He had been stoned and robbed in the pass an hour before. I cleansed and bandaged his wounds, and we moved on in fear and trepidation, but, luckily, the brigands had gone, and we had no trouble. But what a pass that was! Here certainly was the worst hill I have ever attempted, and I must confess the effort frightened me so much that I was in a cold sweat when we got to the top.

What the extreme gradients were, I do not

know, but in parts they seemed like the side of a house, and most of the way we had a sheer wall on one side and a drop varying from 500 to 2,000 feet on the other. The surface was so loose that, in parts, the wheels would hardly grip, but we manipulated it unaided—a fact that was another great laurel to our good Felix. Later I heard that, during the life of the South Persian Rifles an officer named Grant engineered this pass, and ever afterwards it was named "Grant Road" by vulgar-minded people who knew India.

Later that day we arrived at a gendarme post at Saidabad, where we were entertained by the O.C. Troops, who had just returned from an expedition against a notorious band of brigands, in which he had killed two men and taken eight prisoners. But we were men of peace, and all this news made us very nervous, especially so near the end of the journey.

From here the continual neglect of the caravan track has made it hardly perceptible, and going was extremely hard. Floods had washed great trenches across our path, and at many points the whole track was washed

away for hundreds of yards together, and we could only average about seven m.p.h.

In one place we found an exception to the bad "going," and this was on the dry, salt bed of what was once a huge lake. As we approached, it appeared to be an extensive sheet of water, but later it resolved itself into a great bed of salt. In the wet season it is an impassable morass, but in the spring the camels make a straight track across it. It is then as hard as iron, and is perfectly smooth. Later, as the season gets warmer, the whole lake, with the exception of the track, bubbles up, and leaves waves of dry salt, which have the same formation (but on a much larger scale) as that of a sandy beach when the tide recedes.

Across this track we had seven miles of perfect "going," without a bump, and, for the first time for three months, Felix had a brief dash of over forty m.p.h., but the glare from the white salt surface was most trying, and we were glad to exchange this good "going" for the everlasting twist and bump.

For four more days we struggled in a most uncharitable country, where to run a couple

of miles without getting stuck, or having to dig or clear the track, was impossible.

We arrived, on the fifth day, at the last real city we were to touch—Kirman. Of great area and considerable import, it is built almost entirely of sun-baked mud bricks, and is a most unattractive city.

Thanks to Mr. Nelson, of the Imperial Bank, and Mr. Law, the Consul, our stay of forty-eight hours was made very pleasant. Here we made final arrangements by telegraph for advanced petrol dumps, and also for gangs of labour to meet us at various places, where, without man-handling the car, it would have been impossible to pass.

In Kirman, thanks to the kindness of Mr. Johaniddes, of the Oriental Carpet Company, we were able to view and to photograph the largest carpet in existence. It has an area of 1,752 square feet, weighs nearly three tons, contains 42,000,000 stitches, and took a family of fifteen people ten years to make. It was made for the Persian Houses of Parliament, but when it was finished there was nothing in the Persian Treasury except the I O U's of various Government officials, so the authorities could not take delivery. I

have heard since that it may grace the house of an American millionaire, and the figure asked for it is £7,000.

From Kirman we were running continually in sand and salt, in almost waterless country, and in the village of Bam we bade farewell to practically the last vegetation we should see for 880 miles. After two hours' running from Bam we met sand, and, to the end of our journey, sand was our trouble and continual bugbear. I do not think I want to see sand again, not even in an egg-boiler.

At Shurgaz we were met by twenty coolies, who had walked thirty miles to help to push us across a patch of three miles of silver-sand hills. That effort took three hours, and, after leaving the gang, we must have stuck a hundred times during the rest of the day. Redknap and Hussein worked like niggers, and on our second day out of Bam we ran for twelve hours, during which time we made only sixty miles, and finished up absolutely dead-beat, played out.

We camped one night in a rocky valley which I can only liken to the Valley of Despond mentioned in *Pilgrim's Progress*. It contained no life of any kind, and even the

usual crowd of insect pests, that were wont to keep us company at our evening meal, were missing. The only inhabitant of this district is the wild ass. As we prepared to move off the next day the ever-humorous Redknap looked round and remarked, "Humph! No one but an ass would live in such a place, and I suppose it is the lack of food that makes him so damned wild."

Next day we stopped at Dehan-i-Bagh, at the house of the loneliest Englishman I have ever met—a Mr. John May, of the Indian Telegraph Department. He is superintendent of over 1,000 miles of the Indo-European line that runs from India to London. He is responsible for its maintenance, and lives under a strong guard of Baluchi levies. Mr. May's nearest white neighbour is ninety miles away, and his term of duty lasts for two years; but he is one of the type of stout-hearted pioneers who have made Britain what she is.

He had adopted gardening as a hobby, and had carried a good water supply from far away in the hills, by means of a small water-channel, to where, on a piece of reclaimed desert, he had a fine show of flowers, fruit,

and vegetables. Gardening, with photography, kept him fully employed.

We left the next morning, and picked up in mid-desert our petrol dump, which had been carried to us by mule transport. Another day of perpetual sand, and we arrived at Duzdab, on the Persian-Baluchistan frontier, where the Indian North-Western Railway has its terminus. Here even the well-seasoned Hussein fell ill, and we had to send him on by train to Quetta. As a substitute we engaged a Pathan servant, Mohammed Khan, an ex-soldier, who proved a sterling good fellow.

Seven years ago the village of Duzdab did not exist. It sprang up when the railway was brought here, during the days of the war, as a means of supplying the British forces in East Persia. The village now contains a branch of the Imperial Bank of Persia, and is the distributing and loading centre for caravans which communicate with all parts of Persia and Afghanistan.

From Duzdab, Afghanistan is seven miles away, and India a similar distance. We stayed here for forty-eight hours to prepare for our last strenuous six-hundred-mile run.

No animal or vehicular traffic had passed over the trade route for over seven years, and the state of it was very doubtful. Information was very hard to obtain, but an Indian merchant, who was formerly a surveyor on the railway, gave us hope that it would not prove too difficult. Nevertheless, we were very dubious.

For the first fifty miles to Mirjawa, during which we ran south and parallel to the Indian border, there was certainly a visible track, and this distance we managed to cover in six hours. At Mirjawa the railway people put us on a track which was supposed to lead us on to the old trade route. After twenty-eight miles of the most heart-breaking "going" we found that the track had ceased to exist, and we were so near the Afghan border that we began to be anxious. Taking a compass bearing, we headed south again for the railway.

The whole of that afternoon was the most heart-breaking time I have ever experienced, and our difficulties can be imagined by the fact that, on one occasion, though travelling an actual distance of only 600 yards, our speedometer recorded 8½ miles.

We were only saved from complete immobility by the fact that we carried two lengths of wire netting such as is used for building chicken-houses, each about fifteen yards in extent. Whenever the car stuck we laid this down on the loose sand, and it enabled us to pull out of the mess. Poor Felix was tried to the utmost; I trembled for him continually, but breed told, and he stuck it. An extra heavy pitch of sand told on one of our rear springs, and a main leaf broke from sheer weariness. This spring had been in position ever since leaving London, and, considering we had not used shock-absorbers, I marvelled that it had stood the strain.

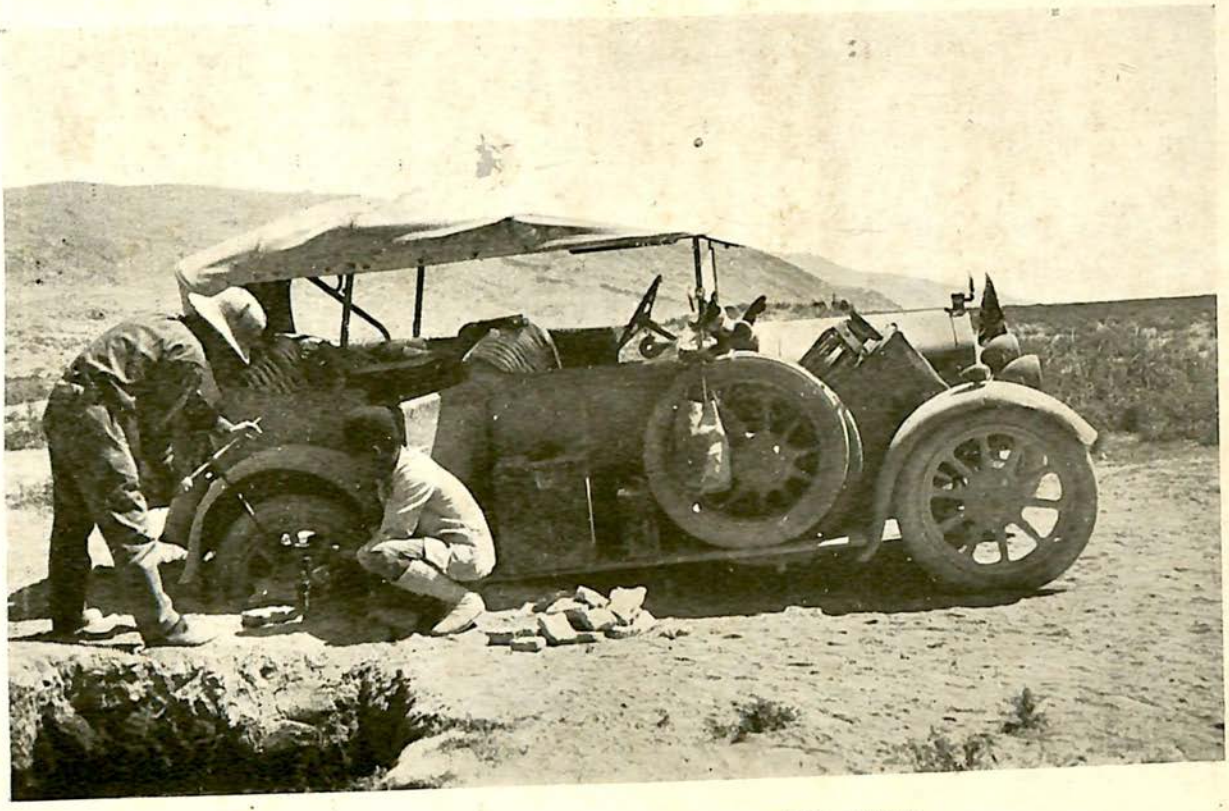
At 5 p.m. we struck the railway-line sixteen miles from our starting-point, having covered only forty-two miles in eleven hours. We then took to the line, and "bumped" over eighteen miles, in the dark, to Warechah station, where we found there had been a raid the previous night. Every drop of water on this 400 miles of line has to be carried by train from Dalbandin, and the stations are really only watering-posts for the trains. They are also forts for the protection of the line, and each station contains a detachment

of Baluchi levies. They are built to withstand a siege, the doors being armour-plated and all windows opening into an inner courtyard, leaving only loopholes outside for shooting.

The next five days were a positive hell. We did little but fight with the sand. When the sand of the plain was hopeless, we took to the railway, and " bumped " over the sleepers, and, when the sleepers were impossible, we went back to the sand. Crawling a few miles a day, we struggled on to Dalbandin, where there is a British garrison.

When we were seven miles from Dalbandin, and " bumping " over the sleepers, a motor-trolley came out to meet us, bringing three Britons on board, namely, Mr. Pigott, the sub-divisional officer, and Captain and Mrs. Franklin. Captain Franklin was the officer commanding the garrison. We rested for a day, and, acting on advice, we took to the sleepers again, and had fairly good going, doing the 102 miles to Ahmedwall in fourteen hours. Here we left the line awhile, and, as far as Mushki, thirteen miles away, we again struggled for nearly five hours with our old enemy, sand.

Nushki is a typical north-west frontier



"IN A HOLE," BETWEEN PERSIA AND INDIA

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station, only five miles from the Afghan border. It contains a strong garrison, and everyone lives behind barbed wire. We lunched with the O.C. Troops, Major Kirkwood, and picked up our last dump of petrol. With only ninety miles to go, we took to the hills for the first time for over 900 miles. For the first twenty miles the going was good, but the track eventually petered out to nothing. After a further five hours' fight with sand we put into Kirdgap station for the night. Here we were depressed to the utmost by the station-master, who told us that the four miles of road ahead of us in the Wassil gorge had, with its two bridges, been washed away in 1917.

We moved on, but, on arrival in the gorge, we found he was right. Our own two spades were useless. We were musing on the ill-luck that had presented us with an impassable obstacle so near our goal when, away on the railway-line, we sighted a trolley carrying a British railway officer. He put a large gang of railway coolies at our disposal, and these worked ahead of us. By clearing here, and filling up there, these men enabled us to do those four miles in eight hours.

Another weary fifteen miles brought us to Kanak, seven miles from Mastung. From Mastung there is a perfect motor road to Quetta, and so we were feeling quite pleased with our prospects until we found a telegram from Major Arthur, of the Wolseley Company. It gave us a nasty shock. Major Arthur told us that it would be a physical impossibility to get the car to Mastung, but we had been told this so often that we decided to ignore it and to try our luck. After struggling for six hours, during which we covered six miles, we found ourselves stuck deep in loose sand, about a mile from Mastung.

We were both dead-beat, so I walked along the line to the station. The station-master turned out a trolley and lent us a guard for the car, so putting our kit on the trolley, we went on to the station and rested for the night. At 7 a.m. we took a gang of twenty men to help to dig us through, and, after four hours' work, we surmounted that last, bad mile. As we came up the final mile to Mastung, we were given a cordial reception by Major Arthur and a Mr. Smith of Quetta, who had come out to meet us.

For the last twenty-seven miles we were on

a perfect motor road all the way to Quetta, but on that bit of good "going" I felt more nervous than I had been on the whole journey. I felt that, having overcome all our difficulties, something would happen at the last minute, but our fears were unfounded.

Several cars came out to meet us, one conveying a Mrs. and Miss Smith and a good lunch, but we were too excited to eat, and contented ourselves with only a bottle of beer before resuming.

Over a railway-crossing, by a military camp, past broad avenues, and rows of bungalows.

Were we? No, surely I was dreaming; but I pinched myself, and found we were really there, there, there—at Quetta at last.

FINIS

HERE, in Quetta, it was difficult to believe that five and a half months had elapsed since we left the Old Country, and yet our task had been anything but easy. From Italy to North Persia, roads, in the true meaning of the word, were practically non-existent. We had covered, in ninety-six running days, a total distance of 8,527 miles, 3,000 of which were entirely void of any kind of road. For 1,500 miles we had travelled on waterless desert, 100 miles on bottomless sand, and for 249 miles we had bumped over railway sleepers. Yet our total bill for spares was £2 17*s*., and we had only two punctures.

For sixty nights we had slept by the car in the open, and, with the exception of the last fourteen days, we had lived on the food of the countries through which we passed. Wroe had been obliged to drop out with typhoid. Redknap had had three bad doses of malaria fever. Hussein had broken down near the end; and only by good luck had I kept fit the whole time. Such was our record as I summarised it in Quetta.

Now I want to pay tribute to the man without whom I feel I could not have finished —Montague Redknap. He came to take films, and was under no obligation to do anything else, but, from the start, he threw himself heart and soul into the work of the expedition. Always smiling, never daunted, I think his smiles were broadest when things looked blackest. In a band of optimists, he was our super-optimist.

Whether we were resting in comfort in Europe, or eating a piece of stale bread and cheese in the desert, he was always the same smiling, cheery pal, and, if credit be due to anyone for our success, a large share of it is his. We were alone together on the latter part of the journey, and I feel sure he will not contradict me if I say that never did two men work with such perfect understanding, or live in better harmony. If I do, in the near future, move into the by-ways of the globe again, Redknap, old man, I hope you will be with me!

As for Felix, dear old friend and prince of cars, well done! As I write now, in comfort in London, with every convenience that civilisation can give, I would gladly exchange

all to hold your wheel, and bump again with you over hill and plain and rock and sleeper. We asked a lot of you, Felix—often too much—but you never let us down. Everyone in Quetta admired you, and Major Jackson, R.E., who was a great admirer of you, wrote in your honour the following little verse, which shall provide the last words of my story of your travels :

Hindu and Mussulman coming to meet ye,
England to Hindustan, Felix we greet ye.
Far o'er the desert, with engine still turning,
Punctures and bandits and obstacles spurning,
Eight thousand miles and more; you must be weary,
Go not to England yet, England is dreary.
England has strikes and fogs unknown in Quetta,
Quetta is better—yes, very much better.

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on 15 October, 2018